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Richard Doddridge Blackmore

THE REMARKABLE HISTORY
OF
SIR THOMAS UPMORE, BART., M.P.,
FORMERLY KNOWN AS
"TOMMY UPMORE."

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Pennâ—

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IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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TOMMY UPMORE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEAT OF LEARNING.

ON the very day before I went to Corpus College, Oxford, my mother did a thing she had never done, nor allowed to be done before. She took me to the Standard-man, who was ready in fine weather then, at the corner of the road, (where people rest in going up the hill) to tell them how much they weighed and measured, for a penny apiece, and anything more they pleased.

My mother gave him twopence, which she said was such a lucky sum, that it might save all the ill effects, though Mr. Cope had assured her, that there could be no harm done by it; and

after great deliberation, with a view to sixpence, and measuring me round the chest—thirty-nine inches and a half, and levelling the top of my head at five feet six and three-quarters (to which I added two inches afterwards), he put me on his plate, and started backward in amazement.

“Must be zummat wrong with this here,” he said; “no young gent, of that bigness, ever could draw under six stone six. There’s plenty of grown up people does; but then they be dwarfs, or mites, or scrummies. But you be a fair-grown young gent, sir; taller, and bigger than the average of the British army, now-a-days; though not up to the size of the Peelers. Never can be true weight this. Ma’am, will you please step on, to try the machine? Twopence pays for two, you know.”

“I am astonished, that you should think of such a thing,” my dear mother answered, as she turned away; “I dare say, your machine is as right as usual. You don’t buy, or sell, by it. Tommy, my dear, have your ticket printed; and come after me to our carriage-entrance.”

"I puts you at eighteen, ma'am, eighteen stone, every pound of it;" the Standard-man called after her, and thereby lost the sixpence which I was holding in my hand for him; "but as for this young gent, if he ain't flying Tommy, as I've heer'd of,—my opinion is that he ought to be."

I was sorry to find, that the like opinion, or at least a suspicion to that effect, had already reached Oxford, long before I did. Mr. Cope had most kindly accompanied me, when I went up to matriculate; but certainly he would have kept strict silence, as to my sad affliction, unless he had thought it his duty perhaps, to speak of it confidentially to the Tutor appointed me by the College; and that appointment was rather a formal than a real matter in my time, and would scarcely be made, till I went into residence. I have known many men, who could not tell, which of the College-Tutors was their special Mentor; though in that respect, I was very lucky.

However that may be, I saw at once, when the College met for the term at Chapel, that in

some way or other, my fame had outrun me; and I could not ascribe it to my mental gifts, which were by no means eminent. All the under-graduates looked at me, with warm but not rude inquiry; and even the Dons, from their lofty thrones, vouchsafed me side-long glances.

And before very long, there was no doubt left; for the captain of the College Boat-club called upon me, quite early in the day, and apologized for self-introduction, on the score of public duty. As behoved a fresh-man, I was rather nervous in the presence of one so exalted; but he very soon set me at my ease; and as soon as the buttery was open, I sent for a tankard of Corpus ale, at his most kind suggestion. In a very pleasant manner, he drank my health, and said that he saw a great future before me, if I would only go in for it. I begged him to explain; which he did at once, after asking whether, as a Corpus-man, I would let him drop all formality. Being proud to be called a Corpus-man—a *lucus a non lucendo* nuncupative—I assured him once for all of my good-will, and freedom from little prejudices. Thereupon he stood up, and asked

me to do the same; and without further ceremony took me by the collar, and with one arm at full length, held me in the air, without even putting his lips together. At first, I was certainly surprised a little, having heard so much of Oxford etiquette; but the smile on his face re-assured me.

"Noble!" he exclaimed, "even better than I hoped. Upmore, we shall be head of the river, four nights after the eights begin. And the beauty of it is, that you look quite unlike a feather-weight."

All this was far beyond my comprehension; and he laughed again, when I told him so.

"Why, of course, what I mean is, that we want a coxswain, and you are the very man for it. Our present man is two stone too heavy, as well as a bad hand at the lines. And no man fit for it came up, last term."

"What lines?" I asked, "I can say the Georgics, and all the odes of Horace, and the three first books of the '*Iliad*,' except the catalogue of ships; but I don't know what a coxswain is."

"We'll soon teach you the catalogue of ships," he answered, with a laugh at his own wit; "and the Corpus ship shall be the first. And as for not knowing what a coxswain is, you are all the better for that, because you can't have formed a bad style yet. Can you tell me exactly what your weight is? I should say well under eight."

Upon this point I satisfied him, by producing the ticket of the Standard-man; which exalted me yet more in his esteem.

"Six stone six," he cried; "and nearly forty inches round the chest! By Jove, what a stunning coxswain! And another pull we shall get out of you. With the wind astern, your head of hair will be as good as a lugsail; and with the wind ahead, we can reef it hard. My dear boy, what a blessing you will be, to old Corp first, and then to the University! No lectures to-day, as I suppose you know. I'll just go and tell the other men, what a wonderful piece of good luck has turned up; and then I'll go down to the barge with you. We'll have a day's practice with a fine old tub, and if you

can't steer pretty fairly by Hall-time, you're a much bigger muff than you look, and I'm no judge of fizzy—fizzyogger. My name it is Green, as the poet observes; but you don't see much of it in my eye. Ta, ta, Upmore, for half an hour. Don't go out, till I come back. We'll fit you up with the water-togger."

Mr. Green went down my stairs—for I lived in a garret of the highest quality—even quicker than I could have gone myself, though I gladly would have challenged him to a race up; and he chanted as he went a loud song of triumph; and all these things amazed me. What I had expected to find at Oxford, from the look of the place, and from what I had heard, was stiffness, formality, quiet, seclusion, and above all a Classic, and religious air.

Bill Chumps, of course, could have told me better; but through a number of causes, I had seen very little of him lately; and the last time we met, he had no idea that I was to go up so soon. Indeed, there had been a little misunderstanding, between the Chumpses and the Upmores. We had a sort of an idea, that since

Bill got his double-first, and fellowship at Pope's Eye, he had not cared to come, and have his bit of dinner with us, altogether in the ancient way. Whereas Mr. Chumps, as I found out afterwards, sticking to business, as he always did, took it amiss—and unreasonably, I think—that when we went so high up Haverstock Hill, and the gate was a good one to turn in at, he was never even asked to send his cart, with the young man in blue, for orders. And what made it worse was, that Gristles, his foreman, had set up in business on his own account, not more than ten doors from the "*Mother-red-cap*," which was all in a straight drive from our place. So that when he came, hat in hand, and "solicited our custom," and old *Grip* knew him, and was greatly pleased to see him, my mother and I (without harbouring a particle of disrespect towards Mr. Chumps) pledged our faith, to let him call for orders.

There were other reasons as well, why Bill had only made a formal call upon us, since we came away from Maiden Lane. But, if I am

to go through every little in and out, the course of my narrative will be as crooked, as the voyage of the pair-oar tub, when I first held rudder-lines on the Isis. Only it is possible, that Miss Windsor, (now grown up into a fine young lady), may have had something to do with it ; not only because of Bill's tendency towards her, but because she happened to hear my mother say, when his double-first was announced to us, that he might thank his father's meat for it. No one should ever repeat a thing, said without spite, yet growing spiteful by mere repetition ; even as transfusions, harmless at first, grow poisonous. And I am sorry to say, that Miss Windsor had not enjoyed, as she should have done, our going up the Hill.

This was the thing that pleased me most, of all I found at Oxford, that there never was any ill-will amongst us, back-biting, or scandal about one another. Every young man settled into his own set, whether by introduction, or connection, taste, or accident, or whatever it might be. If he took a dislike to any one—as young men ignorant of the world do, more than we old

stagers,—he could drop his acquaintance very easily, without saying a word against him; and no resentment was shown, or felt. The two men happened not to suit each other. Each was likely to despise the other; but not to think any further harm of him. And when we did take to one another, I assure you it was something like. Among civilized people, there can be no warmer heart of friendship, combining the weakness of the school-boy, with the set strength of the man. And this was how I felt towards Green, who was the first to take me up; and that is how he has felt towards me, even to the time I write these words; and whatever I say about him, he will think as good as can be said.

When he took me down, to make a coxswain of me, his good nature, and high spirits, rendered my coaching, (as he called it) a pleasure, and a pride to me. He brought No. 7, whose name was Brown; and after rigging me out in a manner, which made me think how proud my mother would have been to look at me, they put me on the hindermost seat of what they called

a tub; but to me it appeared a most alarming vessel. However, I felt no fear of drowning, any more than a cork does; and before very long, I became quite happy. The beauty of the river, and the trees beside it, bright with the April of their hopes, and the meadows, where the grass began to dimple, as the light wind touched it, also the skimming of the boats around us, and the flashing of the feathered oar, together with the newness, and the freedom of the scene, exalted my spirits to the flying pitch.

But never again should I transcend the control of this earthly mass, through joy. Whenever the expansion of high spirits would lift me into the soaring vein, there comes the remembrance of what I did to my dear father,—and down goes all. Alas, all my rise into the air, since then, springs from a darker, and a deeper source, and one more active in the present age—honest wrath at roguery. But of that I knew nothing at Oxford; and little, until I became, against my own desire, mixed up with political, and national affairs.

With these heavy matters to carry through,

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I dare not linger as I would love, among the sweet memories of Oxford life. With a very few lessons, I learned enough to steer our Corpus eight, at practice first, and then in the momentous races, which began upon the 10th of May, that year. The fright I was in, that first evening of the races, was more than I can describe, and it makes me tremble now to think of it. But, with Green looking at me, as calm as a statue, and Brown behind him smiling, I gathered up my courage, and did my best, and we made our bump below the Gut. And I sent off a telegram to my mother, for the wires were just established then—"We have made our bump"—which the people in London turned into something ludicrous; but she knew from my letters what was meant.

I am told that Oxford men are now become addicted to total abstinence,—a craze unheard of in my time, save as a last resource for incurables. And even when we ran the Corpus flag to the top of the rope, as we did very soon, and held a great supper in the captain's

room, to celebrate this fine event, very few indeed of us could be fairly said to have crossed the large boundary of temperance.

Much of the glory was ascribed to me, who had earned it, only by inanity; of which, as a lofty merit, there were then far fewer instances than now. So often was my bodily welfare pledged, first in Champagne, and then in claret, and then in port-wine, and in rum-punch next, and finally in Champagne again, that the fusion of physical and psychical emotions plunged me at length into the last new science, whose name is "Hyle-Ideology."

Green, and Brown, and the rest of our oars, were forbidden to exhibit mutuality, lest the Corpus flag should come down to-morrow; but the rudder fell under no such restrictions; and hard as I strove to maintain a stiff helm, it was more than any hand, and head, could do. However, they put me in a deep arm-chair, through the back of which they passed a curtain-rope. Then they gave me a tassel in either hand, and lifting ship and all, upon their heads, bore me with a favourable breeze

to bed, while all of us chanted a nautical song. I steered the ship, throughout her course, with gravity so accurate, and so discreetly was she manœuvred, that she never once capsized. Now, this will show, whether any one of us could have had one drop too much.

After this, my popularity, not only in the College, but throughout the University, became so vast, that the difficulty was to get a bit of victuals in my own room. All my friends enjoyed my simplicity of mind, and Maiden Lane views of the world; which were not at all Socratic, Platonic, Stoic, nor even Academic. Moreover, they found me so glad to be taught, and so grateful, and unpretending, that they taught me every kind of light learning they knew; so that I got on wonderfully, in every study, never contemplated by Founders, and Benefactors.

Happily indeed for me, athletic contests were as yet most crude; otherwise my speed of foot before the wind would have hurried me into a world of troubles. We had a few College races, and even some rudiments of University

work ; but as yet nothing powerful, and glorious. How should I have felt, after being chosen to run against Cambridge, for the hundred yards, the quarter of a mile, and the hurdle race, if there had been a stiff wind blowing in my teeth, at the starting-post ? All this would have probably fallen upon me, if the athletic contests had then been in vogue ; and I might have won everlasting fame, or base disgrace for ever.

As it was, I believed—though the whole is now forgotten—that I had established deathless fame, by steering the Oxford boat three times to victory over Cambridge. It was natural perhaps that I should be chosen for this distinguished honour, as the coxswain of the first crew on the Isis, and nearly two stone lighter than any other coxswain on the river, while looking as big as bow almost, and with some crews bigger. Yet from my low self-estimate, I was taken by surprise, when the captain of the University Boat-club wrote to me, and even begged me, for the sake of our University (which had been beaten three years running) to accept the office.

Will a duck swim, will a dog bark, will a frog hop, will a Liberal run away? Without a moment's thought, I accepted; and thus began a course of triumphs for the stronger colour, which made the very cabmen shy of mounting the light-blue rosette.

CHAPTER II.

HEREDITARY LAWS.

WHAT man has not described, or made believe to be describing, the race which the journals delight to call the "Inter-University Contest"? What marvel, that we have sold our birth-right to an acephalous mollusk, when the simple use of the tongue has passed into such headless mongreldom? Self-consciousness compels such creatures to befoul their origin.

I, Tommy Upmore, am not a bit better than any of my neighbours; not half so good as most of them—for I know my own faults, and I don't know theirs, or at any rate don't want to know them—but what should I be, if I hearkened to a foe, who takes out of me every gift of God, and turns me adrift, to act by nothing but the

standard, apes have formed for me? "Truth is great, and shall prevail," he shouts; and to show her greatness, proves that she never did exist till now.

Happily, this stuff never troubled us, while I was at Oxford. We looked upon the chosen spirits of three thousand years, and more, as likelier to have left things worthy of our heed and sequence, than the half-taught men who spring up now, and by dint of smashing make a row. The *pudor*, and *verecundia*, of youth were still existing; and we looked up to our College Tutors, and University Lecturers,—men who had made a life-long study of the work they dealt with, who attempted not to gloze our minds with universal smattering, but forced us to learn of some few subjects what is knowledge, and what is not. And this was the distinction Mr. Cope had first tried to drive into me.

But no man, not di-cephalous—as some of our ancestors have been, according to the "Scientists"—can manage to serve two masters well; and being thus apprenticed to the river, I neglected the Aonian heights. My mother

believed, and Mr. Cope assisted her in believing, that I might have done very well in the Schools ; though not so grandly as Bill Chumps. But I passed all examinations fairly, with my solid grounding, and in the final one obtained what was called "an honorary fourth." This satisfied my ambition ; though some cuts at me have been made about it, by people who knew no better.

Grip, who had been, for so many years, my trustful and trustworthy friend, and had taken the warmest interest in my trencher-cap (which he cracked up) and leading-strings (which he pulled off) was immensely pleased with my bachelor's gown, although himself a Benedict. Throughout the whole of my first term, Mr. Luker, the celebrated dogman, had kept his brain at boiling-point (as he confessed most frankly, when I became his admiring client) to make this noble dog his own. With the choicest liver, he waylaid him, and the sweetest female blandishments ; and *Grip*, with either dewlap laughing, accepted all kind overtures, but enfeoffed himself to none of them. At last, a very large sack was made

of tarred material, treble thick, and *Grip* (overcome by his love of the beautiful) was inveigled into it. But no sooner did he find his tail shut in, and feel the Philistines on him, than he rent their toils, like a bursting shell, and flew among them, like a charge of grapnel. Thereupon Mr. Luker came to me, and explained his disappointment about the dog; and assured me, that if he could only have got him, he might have made a hundred pounds of him—to go to Egypt, and do more than England can, put courage into the native animal. And he undertook, if I would come to terms, to pledge his sacred word of honour, that “neither himself nor any other gentleman, in Oxford, or in London, should interfere with the honesty of the dog.” Alas, poor dogs, whose honesty depends upon that of their master!

Then Mr. Luker set before me, in words whose eloquence I cannot reproduce, the loss, not only personal but national, not only national but universal, if *Grip* were allowed to depart this life, without issue, legitimate and guaranteed. To him, the survival of the race of *Grip* was of

infinitely greater moment, than the continuation of the blood of Shakespeare, or Sir Isaac Newton. "Men comes, and they goes," he said, "and the Dooce himself couldn't pick half the ins and the outs of them. But when it comes to dogs, Mr. Up, you can follow the breed, as true as their own noses is."

So we came to a compact,—that he, understanding this elevated subject thoroughly, should provide, for old *Grip*, as meet a consort as knowledge of the dog-world might produce; and that I should have the pick of baby *Grips*, whenever I gave a certificate of race, as soon as each family was two months old. Thus I was enabled to fulfil old promises made to sundry friends, especially Sir Roland Twentifold, and Jack Windsor. And I always knew, which pup to choose, by following the law of paternity among dogs, that the father growls most at his noblest son.

Perhaps it was good for us both, (for surely I was idle enough without him) that my old friend, Sir Roland, had made up his mind, to have nothing to do with Oxford.

“When the institutions of the Country are in danger,” he said, the last time he came home from Harrow, “a man in my position must not waste three years. The very week after I am twenty-one, I shall be returned for Twentibury. Toggins will vacate the seat, to order; I shall stick to it, till there is a vacancy for the county; and then we put Toggins in again. Upmore, it is quite right that you, who have never been out of leading-strings, should go into them for three years more, and get among fellows who may do you good. But for me, it would be folly to waste three years, and know less at the end than when I began. Why, at twenty-one I should be a ‘Junior Sophist,’ or whatever they call a man who has passed his Little-go; and I should have to wait a great deal longer, if I meant to equal Chumps. I don’t want to equal Chumps; he is a wonderful fellow, and I mean to make him useful. But that is not my line of life. I don’t care a penny for the Classics; but I care, every penny I possess, for the reputation of my Country.”

And when he came to see me at Oxford, (as he did, one Summer-term) his talk was chiefly to the same effect. "I am afraid you are a very lazy lot," he said; "you don't seem to me, to have anything to live for, except to play cricket, or pull, or smoke, or spoon upon girls in confectioners' shops"—this was meant for me, who had taken him to see, what lovely brown eyes a very nice girl had, at a place where we ate ices; but Master Roland (clever as he thought himself) little knew why I admired those brown eyes; which I may, or may not, have time to explain hereafter—"and when you have done all that, and yawned, and perhaps played a horn out of the window very badly, or cards yet worse, you can go to bed, as happy as if you had done a great day's good. Pish! I am very glad I never joined you. I want bigger games than yours."

This made me feel unhappy, as if I were despised; whereas the wise men of all ages have continually told young men, to take their enjoyment while they can; going far towards proving, at their own expense, that folly has more joy than

wisdom. But Sir Roland did not mean all this ; and I took it for nothing but his way of talking ; because he would have liked to be among us, but saw that he had thrown the chance away. My idea of life was, to spend as much of it for other people's benefit as they permit—in which matter they are most contrary—and the rest for my own good, with honest enjoyment, and the certainty of better things to come ; if I do not labour chiefly to anticipate them here. And when I say my own good, I mean, of course, the good of my Country, and relatives, and friends ; without which my own could not very well exist.

And after all, politics are a very small part of the general life of most of us. Unless our character becomes involved, and our self-respect grows downward, (like a troublesome toe-nail, that affects our walk) by reason of base things done in our name, against our consent and conscience ; and unless we see things given away, which our fathers gave their lives for ; and unless we are plagued by nursery Acts of Parliament, very good for the unbreeched—it

matters but little to most of us, whether the First Lord of the Treasury be a Conservative, or a Liberal. With such things I never troubled my head, even when I grew to be a Bachelor of Arts; until Sir Roland Twentifold came driving me about them, and his strength of will was tenfold mine.

“Roly,” I said, when I had kept my “Master’s term,” and enjoyed it rarely among old friends, without a stroke of work; “you will never get a bit of good out of me. I am not eloquent, I have no gift of speech; I tried it at the Union once, and when everybody cried out, ‘Bravo, Tommy!’ I could only laugh, and thank them, and sit down. If my father had been a Rad, when he brought me up, (as he had been in his early days) no doubt I should have been a sound Rad too. And for that matter, so would you, I do believe, if you had been brought up to it. I know at least a dozen very honourable Rads, some of them very clever fellows too; who would no more think of doing anything mean, if they had the government of the Country, than you would yourself, if you had it all your own

way. Then, why should we cry out, before we are hurt?"

"Because it's too late to cry out, when we are. What you say is true enough, my good Tommy. Those friends of yours are all honourable enough, individually, I dare say—though the less you have to do with them the better—but when they fall under the dominance of party, what becomes of all their scruples? They sink their own wills, they efface themselves—according to the expression now in vogue—they fall under one imperious mind; and no difference is left between black and white. My father kept hounds, as you have heard me say; and when I was a small boy, I rode my pony with them. There was one most obstinate old stager of the pack, who had a wonderful nose while he was young, and had taken the lead of all of them. But when he grew old he went all abroad; yet the rest had to follow him all the same, on a false scent, more often than a true one. At his dictation, all the younger ones, from habit, sank their own better perceptions, and loyally rushed after

sheep, or donkeys, or anything he gave tongue to. But all these things we can talk of better, when you come down; as you must, next month. You have only been once to us, since you lost your father, more than five years ago. And my mother always says, when I go home, 'Have you brought Ariel with you, at last?' "

"How wonderfully kind she has always been to me!" I answered, liking soft thoughts, better than the hard flash of politics; "if she wishes to see me again, my duty is to go to her."

"Well, that is one way of putting it! A painful duty, my dear Tommy? We will try to make it a pleasant one. You can't shoot; though people shoot at you, when you take a flying fit. Come down in July, and stay three months, and I'll make you a first-rate shot, by the time the partridges are ready. You learn everything, like smoke, you see. I'll back you to beat Counterpaigne on the first; though he has been at it all his life."

"You forget one important point," I answered,

hoping that the objection might not prove fatal. "When a gun goes off, it kicks very hard, they tell me. And it seems too probable, that it would kick me over."

"Not a bit of it, if you lean forward. You are easy to take up, but you are not at all easy to put down, Master Tommy. You are as quick as lightning, to begin with. Nature has provided you with that, no doubt, to atone for your want of thunder. Don't be always running down yourself. There are very few fellows who can do what you can; even if you have altogether dropped your wings, through the gross feeding of these Oxford butteries. But I mean you to put on your wings again. I have a whole lot of things for you to do; and flying is a most essential part. Professor Megalow is coming down; now that I am of age, and all that sort of thing, he can stop at the Towers, as long as he likes. I am sorry to inform you, that he is a Rad. But a man of his size may be anything he likes, without being any the worse for it. I intend to consult him about

you, Tommy, how we may launch you on the clouds again."

"I have not seen him for years," I said;
"if he is going to be there, 'twill be enough to
make me fly again."

CHAPTER III.

A COUNTY MEETING.

How easy it is, for a good-natured man to be taken for the opposite ; and yet how hard for ill-natured people, to put on the guise of kindness ! Not that the world is distinctly divided into those two classes ; for the greater part of it have mixed natures, and are operated on by the mixture.

There scarcely could be any one with a better nature, than Sir Roland Twentifold. He was large-hearted, quick-hearted, soft-hearted too, (when touched at the proper fibre) and yet any Radical stranger who met him, would have thought him the opposite of all these. He had private, and personal motives, (which he disdained to speak of, as being too small ; yet

perhaps they were the spring of everything) for strongly abhorring what he called, "the faction now ruining this Country." I never could believe that any faction would be so factious, as to harm their Country, knowingly, and of set purpose. Yet this he believed, from the bottom of his heart; and it cannot be denied, that their words, and deeds, have gone far to bear out his assumptions.

It must have been the third week in July, and the prime of a glorious summer—such as we never are blest with now—when I had the happiness of visiting, once more, the noble Towers-Twentifold. The woods, and the hills, and the meadows, and even the hollow places that faced the north, had cast away the shivers, yet preserved the freshness, of the cooler time of growth. Many of the fields were lined, or hillocked, with the peaceful tide of hay, which is late in coming into harbour there; while, upon the forward slopes, green corn was wavering into fluent pathways for the wandering wind. And among all the view of the land, flowed in that faint reflection from the distant

sea, which looks as if light threw a shadow of itself.

Blessed was this neighbourhood, to have no railway, out-shrieking the sea-gulls, out-reeking the whale, and even out-roaring the sea in a storm! The station was so far away, that good sound people let their journeys depend very much upon the weather; which is the proper thing for them to do. And after the abominable rush of London—which never should make any fuss about smells, that it never has time to blow its nose at—there came into my heart such a quietude of comfort, that I begged the groom, who was sent to fetch me—Sir Roland being absent at a county meeting—to drive as slowly as the horse would go.

For several years now, I had been as happy as anybody ought to wish to be. I had plenty of money, (through my father's labour, and my mother's liberality) to keep myself, and to help a friend, without wasting any upon that third desirable object (in Solon's opinion) the punishment of an enemy. I was blest with plenty of friends, but cursed as yet with no

single enemy; and though many of my friends were poor, they had too much pride to sponge on me, beyond the mere fringe of a Turkish towel. I had liked a great number of girls, here and there, in a strictly moral and moveable way, so as never to get any heart-ache about them, any more than they got it about me. And as for Polly Windsor, who had seemed to be marked out, by the finger of commerce, as my bride, she had certainly shown herself kind and obliging, after we moved into our new house, and had helped my dear mother to spend much cash, in adorning it with hideous devices.

But, as soon as Bill Chumps came back from Oxford, with his double-first, and his six feet two, to read for the Bar at Lincoln's Inn, she became too personal—and I might say bodily—in her sentiments, to suit my taste.

“Do you mean to grow any more, Tommy?” she had asked, as if love were a question of inches; “why Mr. Chumps must be a foot more than you are; though you have got your heels three inches high.”

"On account of the curve of my foot," I answered; and she knew what I meant, though too delicate to say it; for her feet were like a pair of soles, without any right and left to them. And this made another little breach between us.

Moreover, there was now in my mind, as there always had been indistinctly, the remembrance of a pair of sweet brown eyes, which used to grow bright, and dim, with mine, in the joy, and grief of early days. I knew, without thinking about it, that Laura Twentifold was far above me; far out of sight beyond poor me, in birth, and beauty, and goodness. Also I knew, that she was intended to marry her cousin, the Earl of Counterpaigne; for the good of the family, and of the kingdom too. None the more for that, could I help longing to see what she was like, now time was come for her to be quite a full-grown young lady, with a will of her own, as I heartily hoped, and a kind recollection of her old playfellow. Since the time of the whale, I had never beheld her, except in a great many dreams of the night;

because she had been sent from home, to learn foreign language, and every accomplishment.

The dinner-bell was ringing, as we drove up to the door; for her ladyship held by the good old fashions, and would have no new-fangled gong in the house; and I had only a quarter of an hour, to make ready. So that I was not at all done up, to my liking, failing to find—as always happens in a hurry—some of the things that were most becoming. This flurried me, doubtless, and heightened my colour, so that I blushed at my own red cheeks. But anything was better, as my own sense told me, than to keep ladies waiting, for an unimportant young chap like me.

When I entered the drawing-room, Lady Twentifold, looking more beautiful, and sweet than ever, came up, and took me by both hands, and with all the friendliness of early days, touched my forehead with her smiling lips. At her graceful condescension, tears gleamed in my eyes; and she took them for the thanks I could not utter. Then Professor Megalow, with his gentle stateliness enhanced by the silver

now appearing in his curls, shook hands with me cordially, as if I had been his equal, and said some of the pleasant things, which were always ready for his pleasant voice. I could not help feeling ashamed of myself, having never done anything to deserve such friends.

“We must call him ‘Ariel’ no more, I fear,” Lady Twentifold said to the Professor, with a smile; “we must get you to invent a new name for him, out of the depths of your palæontology.”

“I think we must allow him to name himself; as some of my animals have had to do. What shall we call you, my old confederate?”

“Everybody seems to call me Tommy,” I answered, finding this the truth; “and it sounds more natural than any other name. One of the examiners forgot himself, and called me Mr. Tommy, in the Schools, instead of Mr. Upmore.”

“Then come, Mr. Tommy,” Lady Twentifold replied, “and let me show you an old friend, whom you have not seen, I think I may say, ever since you were my Ariel. Laura, do you know who this is?”

The loveliest maiden the eye could light on, even in a flight among the angels, came forward from the shelter of the summer curtains, and looked at me, with shy surprise. It was a very short look; and yet it has lasted in my heart all life, and will last there through all future life.

Each of us wanted to say something; but neither knew exactly what to say. So we only shook hands, and waited for the easier times of talking.

"We never wait for Roland, now he is so busy," our hostess said to the Professor; "he has scarcely time to feel the necessity, which others feel, for nourishment. When he is an older politician, he will not live entirely on politics."

"Zeal is the great point, in any pursuit," he answered, as she took his arm; "unhappily it cools too often, before it is replaced by habit. But in his case, it will not be so. He has more than zeal; he has constancy."

"Sometimes, I wish that he had less;" Lady Twentifold answered, with a little sigh, while

her daughter came for my timid guidance; "when there are so few of us, it seems hard that the public should claim so large a part."

We dined in a snug little room, and at an oval table I believe; for our small company would have looked forlorn, in the grand old dining-room. For my part, though the Professor talked, as he did when he chose, most wonderfully, with rapid turns of pleasant thought, and leaving, for slower minds, suggestions to bear fruit at leisure, I remember nothing but the smiles, and gaiety, his bright humour spread. The smiles especially I rejoiced in—not my own, but sweeter ones, which thus I had the happiness of watching, and sometimes of sharing in. Are not all sweet smiles the offspring of a sweet reflection; and therefore can they be complete, until themselves reflected? Beautiful Laura, at every smile, looked up for me to share in it; and thus our eyes made bright acquaintance, and our minds went on together, without any need of words. And every now and then, she asked

me some little question about myself, which made me proud to be myself, for the sake of such fair memory.

Just when the dinner was over, the youthful master of the house came in, and after the proper apologies, told us that he had glorious news that day. Toggins, the member for Twentibury, had been brought to see the error of his ways at last; being led, however lamely, to wholesome repentance, by a very serious attack of gout. His first righteous act had been to sit up in bed, and sign an undertaking to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds, at once; so that the writ might be issued, before the Prorogation in August. According to Sir Roland, he ought to have made that application a year ago and more, in fact upon the very day when the heir became of age. But Mrs. Toggins, who had a good deal of money, liked the M.P., behind his name, and urged him to forego the only honourable course. What can be done with a warming-pan, that slips out of its handle?

“Here it is, mother! He can never get out

of that;" my dear friend shouted, as he cast an unfolded letter among the glasses; "I got hold of his doctor, and his parson too. Could his Colchicum work, when his conscience would not? And between us, we beat the old lady altogether; and she now declares, that it is all her doing. Ah, that's what I call a county meeting. Something like 'organization' there! He began to get better, with alarming rapidity, as soon as the weight was off his mind; and I promised him the best glass of port he ever tasted, if he would dine here, on the day of my return. Then I thought it safer, to set off with this. I have had my dinner, let me drink his good health."

Professor Megalow was delighted with all this young enthusiasm; for anything natural always pleased him, whether it were Radical, or Tory. And Sir Roland's sister, who loved him dearly, got up, and embraced, and kissed him. But his mother tried vainly to look glad, and said the very things she thought and felt, according to her loving, and simple nature.

"I am trying to be glad, for your sake, Roly;

because you have so long wished for this. And no doubt it is right, that a gentleman should keep his promise, as he has done at last. I suppose that the Country has a claim upon you, as you say, and feel so deeply; at the same time, I think it might have left you to me, for a few more years at least. There is nothing particularly bad going on just now, that I am aware of; and even Mr. Pancrast seems to promise a great deal more mischief, than he carries out. If there were any great national disgrace for you to stop, I would gladly spare you, even if I had to sit up all night. But when there is nothing—not even for a man to marry his sister—why should you work so?”

“Because,” said Sir Roland, “it is too late to begin, when a thing is over. The most reckless lot that ever held the reins, or flung them on the horse’s back, and lashed him, are now in power—and what sort of power? The power to go at a furious pace, without caring how many people they drive over, or what neck they break, except their own. No power to stop, and

consider their course, or regard the ancient landmarks, and no care how they smash up a fine old coach, not a stick of which belongs to them. Professor Megalow, I beg your pardon. I forget things, when I get excited."

"That is better than remembering them;" the Professor replied with a courteous bow; "we have never had a great legislator, who did not begin with strong prepossessions."

This, and the sense of his own mistake, brought the young host to his manners again. The ladies departed gracefully, and we had no more politics; but a great deal of far more interesting things, including some soft sweet songs from Laura; until my friend took me, to smoke a pipe with him, in his own little room, before going to bed.

"Now, we can say what we please," he began, after giving me his own pet meerschaum, which he had begun, in strict confidence, at Harrow. "What strange things we do come across! How can such a great man as the Professor ever have become a Liberal? I shall spare some of them, for his sake, while I slash at the

party in general. To my mind it seems almost to prove, that some of them must have high principles, though they keep them out of their performances. No, thank you, no cigars for me! A pipe soothes me, a cigar only irritates; I like to see the fruit of my own works, not to cast away the root, when done with. And now, my dear Tommy, the next job is to bring you in for North Larkmount. Larkmount is a fine constituency, consisting of honest freemen, or at least they always turn the poll. But we can't get you in, just at present, I'm afraid. However, that won't matter much. I shall not say a word this Session; but see how they do things, and get acclimatised."

"But I don't want to get in at all," I said; "or at any rate, not for a long time yet. I would rather enjoy myself, for a year or two, and be an M.A., before being M.P."

"Not so. You must buckle to, at once. I have arranged it all, with the greatest care. Not another Session must be lost, before I have you, and Chumps, to back me. The enemy have several evil works on hand, and they will invent

a lot more in the holidays. I shall have in Chumps for his great abilities ; and you, beloved Tommy, for your flying powers."

"I do not like that way of putting it at all ;" I replied, with my usual frankness. "I cannot fly now, any more than you can. And if I could, they would not let me, in the House of Commons."

"That shows how much you know about it. If you had been up in the gallery, as I have, to see what they were at, night after night, you would know that they were as larky as a lot of schoolboys. I got Professor Megalow down here, as he thinks, because of the *pelvis* (or whatever he calls it), of a mighty dragon, in the cliff at Happystowe. But really, and truly, my dear friend, that he might put you on your wings again, or else show me the proper way to do it."

"Then you have behaved very badly," I exclaimed, "and not like a friend, but a selfish politician."

CHAPTER IV.

OLD BONES, AND YOUNG ONES.

So much was I vexed at this idea, that Sir Roland Towers-Twentifold valued me, only as a flying puppet, a machine to be started from a spiral spring, or a little boy's coloured balloon, that I assure you, although I was on a bed soft as a dew-cloud—for we did not lie upon cast-iron yet—scarcely a wink of sleep came near me, without being scattered into a fire-wheel of dreams. If it appeared to me a small thing—as it did in modest moments—that I should be brought from London, like a tailor to take orders, or a fellow to exhibit Punch, and Judy—yet how could I reconcile it with the fitness of things, that Professor Megalow should be tempted, with the very biggest dragon for his bait, to come down, upon the really ignoble errand of flipping me up, like

a pith-ball of elder, between the plates positive and negative.

At first I thought of consulting him, as to what I should do in the morning; for who else could advise me, so kindly, or so well? But I saw that his counsel was not to be had, without a disclosure of everything; and I had no right to tell him of his own "mission" here. So that on the whole, I was compelled to act, (as I nearly always find to be the case with me) by the dim light only of my own perceptions. "I have no right to make any scene," I thought; "neither is it possible for me to leave abruptly, without giving reason; Lady Twentifold has been most wonderfully kind to me, ever since she first saw me; and she can have no paltry political motive, such as this one-idea'd Roland has. And then there is beautiful Laura, sweet Laura—I suppose I ought to call her Miss Twentifold, but consider the years I have known her—there never has been anybody like her, since the days of Paradise, and how dreadfully rude I should appear to her! Of course, I must never think of her at all, any more than I might of the pole-

star. Still, I should like her to think of me, if she ever deigns to do it, with all kindness and good-will. Ah, ha! Lack is the luck! I am a most unhappy fellow. My mother said once, that I had no right to be born; and who should know so well as she?"

But before I had quite finished "doing my hair"—as the ladies express it, and mine very often took almost as long as a lady's to do, because of there being so much of it,—Sir Roland came thumping my dressing-room door, and with his usual impetuosity, rushed in.

"Tommy, shake hands, like a man," he exclaimed, "or I'll pull all your hair out of trim again. You cut up, as rough as a clinker, last night; the first time I ever saw you out of temper. However, a new hope sprang up in my breast. Do you know what you did, as you went along the passage?"

"No. I remember nothing, except that I said to myself—'I am not a machine, and I won't be treated as a machine. If he only wants me as a Jack in the box——'"

"A Tommy in the box, you mean. No, no.

You must lay aside all those small ideas. It is not I that want you, it is your Country, your noble, but outraged Fatherland. Those are the sentiments that should exalt you, instead of petty wrath against your ancient friend. But I see a new provision in the laws of gravitation—which Pancrast will bring in a bill to abolish, before we are very much older. In your anger, you tried to stride loftily, as behoves the most illustrious of all coxswains; but instead of so doing, you never touched the ground! You flitted, without any coarse agency of legs; like the ghost of Achilles, at the great deeds of his son.”

“Well, I thought there was something unusual about it,” I answered, without any heroism; “but my mind was so occupied with its wrongs, that I never noticed how I walked.”

“That is another most excellent sign. Temporary absence of perception. The main point will be, to enlarge the indignation—to ennoble it, to make it national, instead of individual. Your course of reading at Oxford—even though you read nothing there at all, except novels—has pro-

duced, in your system, a fundamental change. In your early days, exhilaration carried you over the heads of the public. You have seen too much of the world by this time, to be exhilarated any more. Joy can no more elevate you ; and Nature (rejoicing as she does in exceptions) has found a fresh way, to keep you in the list. But a perilous turn of the balance for you, I am sadly afraid, dear Tommy. Joy is not frequent, even in the days of boyhood. But indignation—oh, Tommy, Tommy, what a lot of lead pipe you must carry round you, if you once become liable to leave the earth, every time you see wrong being done upon it ! ”

“ Clear out,” said I ; “ I want to finish dressing, and not to be plagued with immoral reflections. If you want to spare me all that lead pipe, regulate your own conduct first, by the lofty standard you want to bring me up to. That little business about Toggins, for instance, might force me to put on a pound or two ; though a lily-white act, in comparison with the things you do at election-time.”

To enter into that matter did not suit him,
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while in his present fine vein of morality ; so that he only made a face—being still a boy, as much as I was—then he pulled in his tongue, and tapped his lips, and said,

“Not a word about that, to the Professor, mind. I have boasted to him, about the purity of everything ; and he has promised to come and be gratified. And gratified he shall be, by everything that is noble. Now look alive ! I shall have a busy day to-day. I mean to go canvassing, though of course I need not do it. But I am sure, that the women would be angry, if I didn't ; and with this clash of changes coming, it is not only wise, but necessary, to keep them on our side, as they are by nature. If nothing else showed the Conservative cause to be the true one, it would be enough that the women always take to it.”

With this, which moved me a great deal more than the rest of his arguments put together, he set off to shave himself, which he insisted upon doing, now and then, with a competent eye to the future. And no sooner was he gone, than I set to, to get everything about me into the proper

place, that I might not be taken, at breakfast-time, for a young man at all of a Radical turn.

This made me late, though I had got up very early; earlier than any other of the party, except Professor Megalow; and when I came in, he was describing, with his usual clearness and quietness, the object of his labours.

“It is still *in situ*, in the composite bed, none of which is of hard material; and indeed it would be easier to extricate it perfect, if the matrix were more consistent. We shall want a very careful hand to-day; and at the same time, light feet under it. Unhappily, I am a little above the proper scientific stature; neither can I any longer claim the flexibility of my earlier days. Unless I can secure a very able coadjutor, such as I once had the good luck to obtain, there will be great risk of injuring one of the finest specimens of the noble Deino-Saurians, I have ever had the fortune to behold. Let me try to describe to you the exact position, which makes the extraction so difficult.”

This he did so well, that I could see the place; though without any idea of the treasure it con-

tained. He asked if he might take some dry toast, and with it built up a rough resemblance of the cliff, and excavation; then he lodged, in the back of the hole, three joints of a prawn, to represent the relics of the monster, and shored up the crumbling of the toast, with a stump of lead-pencil, and some sprigs of parsley.

“The position is rather precarious, you perceive,” he said to Lady Twentifold, and her daughter, who watched his frail structure with great interest; “and of the people you sent most kindly, to help me yesterday morning, intelligent as they were, and very obliging, there is not one who goes into this bower, without some trembling, and a superstitious awe. They are not so much afraid of the cliff falling on them, as of the outrage they fancy they are doing, to some unknown gigantic power. ‘Could he eat me, sir, if he come to life again?’ the bravest and biggest of them asked me; one of your under-keepers, I believe. ‘Certainly he could, if he were carnivorous,’ I was obliged to answer; and that last word frightened them, beyond all former fear. Now, I could extract this grand relic

by myself, for I am not beneath average human strength, if I ventured to make more headway ; but you see that in brittle material, such as this, I am afraid that the whole might fall suddenly, and perhaps destroy the beauty of the specimen. And even without that, I want another hand, most sadly ; it need not be a very strong one, for I would bear the weight of this—the heavier end ; but it must be a hand that does not shake, as I am sure the bold gamekeeper's would."

"Why, I will come, and help you with the greatest pleasure," exclaimed Sir Roland, "and obey every whisper. My canvass at Twentibury will do to-morrow. This is of infinitely more importance."

"It is most kind of an eager politician," the Professor answered, with a grateful smile, "to show such preference for the bygone world. But alas ! my dear friend, you are much too tall. There is no room for you, at that end of the cave."

"Then, Professor Megalow, may I go with you ?" Miss Twentifold asked, with her lovely eyes sparkling. "I am not very strong ; but my

hand is steady, and I should enjoy it so. Dear mother, say that I may go and help. I would put on my shrimping-dress, and a thick cloak."

I could not help looking at her with alarm; while I did not yet like to out-bid her for her wish. Lady Twentifold glanced at her with pride, but serious misgivings about the risk. And the Professor firmly answered "No!"

Being thus relieved, I was only too glad to offer my services, which were at once accepted.

"Tommy is the lad cut out, by nature, for this very operation," the Professor said kindly, as he took my hand, which was hardened by long use of the rudder-lines; "he is a model of strength, so far as light weight permits; and his lightness of touch has long been proved. If I had my pick of the young men of England; for a job like this, I should choose our Tommy."

"But I may come, and see it, without being in the way. I am sure Mamma will let me do that," cried Laura; "and the Professor cannot be hard-hearted, if he tries. And I particularly want to go to Happystowe to-day."

"If you will be burdened with her, she may

go," Lady Twentifold said to her visitor; "and I should like to join you in the afternoon, or meet you perhaps upon your way back; for I must be at home, till two o'clock."

Things were soon ready, and we three set off, in a light waggonette, for Happystowe; and but for one thing, it would have been hard to say, which of the three was the happiest. The Professor, with his bag of sacred tools, was glowing with the prospect of a mighty prize, in his special field of glory, and the tangible proof of his own inductions, published in a treatise ten years ago. His fair companion was beaming with the brightness of her own youth and beauty, and the joy of the air, and of a day among the rocks, with her sketch-block and her shrimping-net. But I, by reason of that one thing, I was happier than three times three, or nine times nine of all their happiness. A fig for the science, and the old dry bones, the traces of the lubbers that deformed the earth—for they were too big only to disfigure it—till beauty was created, to make them die of shame. And a fig even for the blue sky, and gray sea, and brown

rocks standing up to be painted ; if only I might watch Laura's face—without any token of doing so—catch the glint of a smile that began far away, and sometimes receive to the home of my heart a gaze of good-will, all intended for me.

I would gladly have dwelt in that happy waggonette, till all the old dragons came to look for their bones, with Laura sitting by my side and laughing, and often saying very simple things, and the Professor opposite, to balance us, enjoying (as he always did) the company of the young, and nodding in his humorous way, for me to explain to this young lady some of his less recondite terms, as if I were an acolyte, at least, of science. He did it on purpose, I am very well assured ; because he perceived the condition of my heart, and desired to promote it by the action of the mind. Being steadfastly Liberal, and taking a very large view of genealogy, he discovered no unfitness of things whatever, in my tendency to a deep tenderness, towards a member of the race so far above me.

But that most delicious drive was gone in no time, as everything delicious is. We put up, of

course, at the "*Twentifold Arms*," where several of the maids remembered me, and Mrs. Roaker was most generous. And it seemed to me one of the most delightful traits in the character of Professor Megalow, that he should be so wholly wrapped up in his tools, as to make it my duty to hand Miss Twentifold, down the three steps of that fortunate carriage. She never said—"Oh no, thank you; I have my bag to hold; and I can get down very well," as girls do generally, whom it is a very small privilege to help down. But she gave me her beautiful hand, with her beautiful foot on the step, and her beautiful eyes for a moment met mine; so that altogether I was quite overpowered with the sense of beauty, and—which is yet greater in the end—of goodness.

The Professor's face wore a truly scientific air, as he noticed these things, for nothing ever really escaped him; and he rubbed his nose gently, as he gazed at the far offing, as if he had descried there a palæozoic ship.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE ROCKS.

Few and far apart the days are, such as came out of the heaven just then, when the stoutest Briton, and his wife, can find no hole ready-made, or to be well picked, in the weather. And what is the good of the finest weather to him, if he employs it in picking holes in his friends, or his enemies, or even in himself? But any one, who loves large ways and thoughts, or even little ways, when they are good-natured, might have looked with true pleasure, at the Professor for the first, and at Laura and me, for the latter enjoyment.

Professor Megalow heartily enjoyed the company of young people, and old hats; and to-day, he had put his great head into a hat, with very

good reason to assign for it, of fine archaeological interest. And even if things had been as adverse with me, as they were for the moment prosperous, no moderate misery could have held its own, against the influx of his geniality. He marched on before us, to the haven of his hopes, with a long forked tool upon his shoulder, and a bag of learned organs in the other hand, and he never turned round, unless we called upon him ; which proved the perfection of scientific insight.

“ Oh, how I should like to be like him ! ” said Laura ; “ but I never can carry a long name long. I learn to pronounce them, and to try to know their meaning ; and then the next day, I am as wise as ever. Nearly all the young ladies now are so scientific. As one of the books says, it is such a manifold addition to their interests.”

“ Not to the interest felt in them ; ” I answered, though afraid of my own words. “ It makes them so conceited, and so full of their own ideas. And they talk, as if they knew everything, with the little bits they pick

up from books. That is not the way great men get on. They get on, by their own observations, and experiments, and by putting this and that together; and so they make great discoveries. And when they have done it, they are always humble, because of the quantity they can't find out. Look at our dear friend there! Does he ever pretend to know anything at all? Does he ever lay down the law about anything? Even upon subjects, he understands more thoroughly than any other man yet born, he speaks (when he does speak at all) with more doubt, and diffidence, and humility, than a schoolgirl does, who knows nothing about it, except from one of his own books. The smaller the mind, the more positive it is."

"Then ladies ought to be very positive—at least I mean most of them, like me. But how slowly we are walking! The Professor will think, that we have no zeal for his bones at all. Whereas I fully mean to go in, and help."

"I hope you won't think of doing that," I

answered, as we turned the corner, and could see the excavation; "unluckily, you were not entrusted to me, or I should forbid it most decidedly. It looks rather dangerous, and is sure to be very dirty; and what good can you do in there?"

"What good can I do anywhere, if it comes to that? I came here, to see everything, and I mean to do it, unless the Professor forbids it, and he would not have let me come, if he intended that. Let us go and ask him. No, he is too busy!"

His attention was wholly engaged, as we saw, and he was speaking earnestly to the man, who had been left in charge of the place, last evening.

"You see no difference," he said; "I do, and a very considerable difference, Barnes. There has been no rain in the night, and no groundswell to produce any vibration. Your shores are all standing, it is true, but not quite as they stood yesterday. We must have three hours more of work in there, before I have exhausted the *situs*; and I would not

allow any man to come in with me now. Tommy, keep away, and take Miss Twentifold. I shall have to collect all my forces, and shore up afresh, before I dare use a tool. The cliff is quite low, but too high to be safe; and there is a public footpath along the top. The tide is going out; in half an hour, you might get some good shrimping round the point. Allow me to commend that pursuit to you, for the next two or three hours."

"You are going in and out, yourself," I said, though I took good care to lead Miss Twentifold away; "as if there were no sign of danger whatever. But if we should do more harm than good, the best plan would be to go shrimping, as you say. But how shall we know, sir, when you are ready for us,—or at least for me, of course, I mean? Lady Twentifold will be down, perhaps, about three o'clock."

"When all is made safe, and I want your good hand," the Professor answered, with a look at me, and a wave of his faithful old hat to the lady, (which said—for all his hats said something—"I like you very much, but I don't

want you now ") " you will see, my dear friends, this conspicuous example of the industry of the Orient, waving on that pole."

He pulled from his hat a large yellow silk handkerchief, spotted with white, and shook it at us, as a flag-signal to be off.

" Now, what shall we do? Shall we obey orders, or is there anything you would like better? Perhaps you are afraid of the rocks, and the sea-weed, and the way the waves come running up the hollow places."

I said this, on purpose to stimulate her ; perceiving the very fine spirit she had, which the colour in her cheeks was enough to prove. All I was afraid of was, that she might doubt the propriety of going round the point with me.

But she was too simple and good, to do that. She thought not of harm, any more than she had done it; and the only expression in her eyes was pleasure.

" Where have you put the nets ? " she asked ; " you shall have Roly's, and I will have my own."

Now, if there had been in my nature yet any

lingering of the old tendency to rise into the air, through exultation, could anything have baulked it of its operation now? Within a mere mile of the spot, still shown as the scene of my early exploit, with the weather set fair, and the wind the right way, and with beauty at my side, a millionfold more enchanting than any first view of the sea—what was the reason that I did not fly?

Let Professor Brachipod explain that, if he can; and there is nothing that he will not explain most ably, whether he is able, or whether he is not. Some great change had “permeated my organisation”—as they call it, as if I were full of pipes—which made me cleave rather to the earth (in periods of exuberant happiness) than soar to the sky, to complete it there. Perhaps when I grow old, I shall become less earthy, and again seek my happiness by going upward; but nothing now sets me on the springs of my system, except the most expansive and elevating indignation.

And to put aside that, and all questions whatever of the motives for this, or the reasons

against that, would manners (any more than common sense, and sound judgment) have allowed me to fly away from lovely Laura? So long as I had her at my side, what else in the earth, or the air, or the sky, could I desire?

No one has noticed—to the best of my knowledge—what a comfort there is, in the pattering of feet, when they keep time, and answer well to one another. Not as a single pair, I mean, each coming after the other with a gap; but as a pair of a pair-going feet, toe and heel exactly to one another, with no more space crosswise between them, than the other foot requires to come up, and fill the gap. And when this is done upon a firm gray sand, with just enough spring to make it beautiful to walk, and just enough yield to take a light impression, how can the most scientific human body, with a fair human body at the side of it, continue to lament that it is not quadruped?

When we came to the rocks, it was even better. For here, there was such a fine slippery spread of the carpet of the sea, and so many green

fringes, covering traps where a little foot might sink, and perhaps get sprained, or at any rate get soaked, that at every few yards there was need of a hand, or sometimes of two, for discretion of step. And at every such aid, there was a smile to pay; not to mention the downcast of eyes sometimes, and sometimes their uplifting with a soft, sweet light, and the fluttering of lashes in the fresh wind from the sea, and the murmuring of lips, more pink and melodious than any clear Pacific shell. And when the brisk freedom of the salt air shed the dark clusters of her hair, upon her face and neck, veiling the gentle blush and the shy damask, my very best manners, and most deep responsibility, struggled in vain to prevent me from saying—"You are the very image of a beautiful moss-rose."

She was not at all offended, but looked calmly at me; and answered, to my horror—"What a beautiful idea! I shall tell Mamma, that you said that."

"Oh, please don't do anything of the sort," I exclaimed; "she would be sure,—or at least

she might—I cannot exactly make you understand. But she might not be altogether pleased, you know.”

“Well, I don’t see why. She is very fond of poetry. But if she would not like it, you should not have said it. But don’t be so distressed. I will promise not to tell her; because I am sure that you meant no harm. Oh, here is my first shrimping-pool!”

“I will sooner bite my tongue out,” thought I to myself, as in humble confusion I unbound the nets—“than utter another syllable of admiration. What a fool I am! But who could help it?”

This put me on my very best behaviour, for a while; and even when she slipped upon an oozy slab, and nearly fell into a pool a foot deep, I did not hold her up, any more than I could help. And after that, being under orders not to use my net (which I began with, upside down) until I knew something about it; but rather to watch how she managed, and to learn to do the like,—not an inch of advantage did I try to take, but with scrupulous honour held my net betwixt

us, and smiled as if my face was as stiff as were my hands.

"I am afraid you don't enjoy this work;" she said.

"I am afraid of enjoying it too much;" said I.

And that made her laugh; for she had not the least idea of the darkness of my meaning.

"Now, you may fish upon your own account," she told me; "you see how you must draw the net along beneath the ledges, with the hinder part of the rim kept higher, to brush the rock so that they can't get back over it; and go well in under all the fringes of the weeds; and then up with the other rim, and fetch it out briskly. Now, you fish a little; while I look on, and applaud you, if honesty and facts permit. You shall have this large pool all to yourself, and it is the best among all the rocks. And you can manage Roly's net, which is half again the size of mine, you see. Now, I particularly want two dozen prawns, and they are not at all plentiful on this coast. I have only got seven yet, with all these shrimps. But everybody says that you

are so lucky ; and I shall believe it, if you catch one prawn ; they are much quicker to get away than shrimps, and so it requires more skill to catch them. Well, I declare ! You have got at least a dozen. I never saw so many in one haul before. Let me take them out, or they will be sure to jump away from you. Oh, what a very spiteful creature ! ”

A very large prawn, with no sense of the beautiful—at least as existing in the race that boils him—had rasped her most exquisite fore-finger (which looked in the water as pellucid as himself) with the vile long crock-saw, which he carried on his head. And what made it the more meritorious on her part, she held fast to him still, and dropped him into the bag.

“How wonderfully brave you are ! ” I cried ; “it is bleeding, two or three large drops. Put it into your mouth, and suck out the poison. Oh, how I should like to do it for you ! Don’t be so intrepid ! You never can tell. He may have been living with a water-snake. I could tell you such stories, if it would stop bleeding. Let me tear up my handkerchief, and bind it.”

“No, it is nothing at all; and if they were poisonous, how should we eat them? I split a piece of pop-weed, and put it on like a thimble, and that stops the bleeding immediately. It is not the first time they have given me a rasp. My dear mother likes me to wear gloves, whenever I go shrimping; but I always pull them off. I like to feel things, with my own hands. There, what a fuss about nothing! Now go on. How wonderfully fortune favours you! I have heard it so often, and now I can see it. Try that corner, there is always something there. Roly caught a fine silver mullet there, last summer; and I caught a little fish, we didn’t know the name of.”

“Let me try to smile nicely,” I said to myself; “I always get the best luck when I smile. Cause and effect are always hugging one another. To doubt one’s luck, is to doubt it nearly always. I want to impress her with my good luck, for what impression is more favourable? Faint heart never won fairy prawns. That corner looks full of miraculous draught.”

“Oh, please to let go—let go, Miss Twenti-

fold! He may pull me in, but he mustn't pull in you."

For seeing me engaged with a mighty adversary, my lovely companion rushed forward, and put fair hands on the pole of the net, because my light figure was thrown off its balance, by an unexpected weight and force.

"Whatever it is, you shall have all the glory," she answered, as she obeyed me; "only I was afraid you were tumbling in."

"So I will, if it is needful. I don't mean to let him go," I exclaimed, as I set my heels firmly in a ledge. "Here he comes! What in the world have we caught?"

"A giant of a lobster, a perfect giant!" She was clapping her hands, with delight, as she said it. "Oh, I never beheld such a monster in my life! And there never was any one, with luck like yours. There, anybody else would have lost him but you."

"I don't mean to lose him, if he murders me," I shouted, as I swung him out mightily, and laid hold of him; "oh, he has laid hold of me, in the most inhuman manner! Whatever shall I do, to get out of his clutches?"

For this trenchant radical had nipped me by the wrist, with one mighty claw, and was clutching about with the other, to embrace me somewhere else.

“Oh, Tommy, take care of your nose,” she cried, forgetting all formality in fright; “oh, what will your mother say, if you lose your nose? I know an old sailor, who has got the mark now. There, that claw is harmless at any rate. Now let us consider about the other.”

She had cleverly pushed a large stone between his unoccupied nippers; but the villain lay stubbornly on his back, in a great tussock of weeds, spreading his long whiskers, and dappled joints, and lashing about the blue fans of his tail, and exerting all the leverage of his body, to drive his toothed fangs through my poor wrist; and if any one else had been there but Laura, I should have roared with the violence of pain.

“Oh, I am so sorry! Oh, how very dreadful! I would not have had it happen, for all the lobsters in the world.” As she spoke she knelt by me, and her cheek touched mine, and a

shower of her hair came streaming down, so that I could put my lips to it.

“Let him pinch away as hard as he pleases,” I exclaimed, “he’ll be tired before I am, of this position.”

However, it was impossible not to feel, that the position would be better without its drawbacks. Even love’s young dream may be sweeter, without night-mare; and painful is the bravest smile of pain. With a quick thought, she ran for the handle of her net, and slipping it out of the socket, entered the taper end in at the heel of the claw, and with the aid of my other hand, unlocked my horny handcuff.

CHAPTER VI.

BENEATH THEM.

“ Now let us go back, as fast as we can,” she said, when she had wrapped up my wrist very softly, with her muslin handkerchief—which I took care never to restore to her ; “ the tide is coming in, and if it gets to the point before us, we shall have to go a mile inland. And I declare, we have forgotten all about the Professor’s signal, which may have been waving for an hour ! And perhaps my dear mother may be waiting for us. But this unequalled lobster will account for all delay. How quiet he is, since we tied his claws ! I ought to beg your pardon for the liberty I took, in calling you ‘ Tommy ; ’ but I was in a fright, and it sounds so very natural, because of the Professor ; and Mamma is almost as bad as he is.”

"I will only ask you one thing," was my answer; "try to be as bad, or as good, in that way. Call me 'Tommy,' every time you speak. Why, don't you remember when I put a new leg to your doll? And you gave me such a kiss, that I have thought of it ever since. And you said—'You are to call me *Lo*, remember. All the people I like best are to call me *Lo*. And I think I like you best of almost everybody in the world.' But of course you have forgotten all that now."

"What extraordinary creatures children are!" she exclaimed, as if she were the mother of the "*Lo*"; and then she came nearer to me, and said—"I remember that you were a great favourite of mine; and I don't like you not to call me anything. But look, there goes the great handkerchief!"

"You shall not get out of it like that;" I answered, with a little groan, as if my wrist was in great pain, for fear of any wrath on her part. "People should always understand each other; and how can they do that, without any names? You should call me 'Tommy,' upon all occasions;

because I am Tommy, and nothing else ; and even the Examiners call me 'Tommy,' because of my steering the eight so much. But it never would do for me, to call you 'Laura,' except when we are quite by ourselves, you know; or with only the Professor, who never would tell, and I don't suppose he would ever notice it. In general society, I must call you 'Miss Twentifold.' But in particular cases, now and then, I should be very much obliged indeed, if I might,—just to keep up the practice, as one might express it, call you only 'Laura.' ”

I would gladly have put something else before “Laura;” but I thought this was far enough to go just yet; and it would make it all the nicer, that her mother should not know it.

“Tommy,” she replied, with as clear an intonation of my friendly, and genial, but not romantic name, as I ever yet was accosted with, “I shall leave it entirely to your own discretion, to call me what you like, and when you like. And I see no possibility of harm in my calling you, what all the Examiners at Oxford do. They gave you the most honourable class of all,

I hear; because you never asked for it. The Bishop says, that you might have beaten Mr. Chumps."

This must have been an error on the Bishop's part, or hers; because there was no way to beat a double-first then; though now a man may go into perhaps five and twenty firsts. But I did not attempt to contradict her, after all her kindness.

"I hope, you have never seen Mr. Chumps; " I said, purposely making him as formal as I could; for I knew that if Bill Chumps came down here, for canvassing purposes, or anything else, he would be sure to get elected far in front of me.

"Oh yes, I have," she said, "a very tall gentleman, taller than Professor Megalow, or Roly; but not to be compared with them, in any other way. He has very red cheeks, and rather high cheek bones, according to my recollection."

"And a nose that sticks up a good deal," I replied. "Did you understand, when he came down, that his father carries on the business still? Not that it matters, as we all think now, from by any means a lofty point of view."

“It never came into my mind to ask,”—and herein her simplicity put me down—“anything at all about his father. Why should I? Roly brought him; as he brings anybody, who can be of use to him in politics. It is not my place, to have anything to say to them, except what is expected from the people of the house. And I believe he saved the life of my first cousin, Lord Counterpaigne; and that alone would make him no stranger here. But look! If it were possible for the Professor to be in a hurry, he would be so now. We have been a long time, and I am afraid he will be angry. Let us put on steam—as Roly says.”

I wanted no steam put on at present, but found no fair means of preventing it; and a few quick steps brought us up to the pebble-bank, under the cliff of the sacred relics.

“Aha!” the Professor cried, coming down to meet us, “no wonder I have waved my bandana in vain. What a magnificent specimen! And the beauty of him is, that he is good to eat; which, alas! was more than I could say for my specimen in there; when the lady superior of all the fish-

women of Happystowe asked me just now, how I meant to cook my bones. She has marched away in sadness, at my dreadful waste of time. However, at last, all is perfectly ready; and I would have gone to work without you, except for the dread of your reproaches. We have made all the front quite safe, and the fissure at the back is not extending. The light is good still; but we have no time to lose."

"And my mother," asked Laura, "has she not come yet? She was to have been here, an hour ago. She will be so sorry, to see nothing of the work!"

"She has sent down a groom, with a kind little note, to say that she cannot come till five o'clock, and begging me on no account to wait for her. I would gladly have put it off until to-morrow, but any change of weather might be fatal, or even a groundswell with this spring-tide, of which there are some signs already. This rock, is not like the hard sandstone further north, or even firm chalk; but a brittle conglomerate. We are not our own masters; we must set to work at once. Tommy, I will not

keep you long inside ; and Miss Twentifold should stand behind this high-water mark."

He took off his hat, and laid it down upon the shingle ; and then with a short tool of steel in one hand, (something like what the police call a "Jemmy," but forked at one end, and gouge-shaped at the other) and a square of soft felt in his left hand, he went into the cave, or rather excavation ; and I (with my hat off) followed him. There was plenty of light, when the eyes got used to it ; and I saw that the roof was established with short slabs of wood, supported by timber props.

"Why, there can be no danger whatever," I said, almost with some disappointment ; "it is as safe as the dome of St. Paul's, I am sure. Of course, you know best, sir ; but I should have gone straight at it. Can you spare me a tool to work with ?"

"No," he replied, "you must use no tool ; but only follow my directions. Why, what is the matter with your wrist—the right one ?"

"Nothing, but a trifle of a pinch," I said ;
"I can use it as well as ever, I assure you."

"Very well ; then watch me, but don't speak loud. There is no danger now, as you truly observe ; or else I would have kept you outside, my Tommy. But you see that, to secure our object without fracture, I have yet to dig out a good bit of the shale—for it scarcely deserves to be called rock. And when that is done, there may be some little risk, because we cannot get any shores behind it. From what you have seen with me, you know at once, that the object before us is no *pelvis*, as Sir Roland insists upon calling it. All that part was easily secured ; but I saw indications of continuance ; and following them up, discovered these,—which are very grand joints of the *vertebræ*. The weight will be very considerable, and we must try to preserve the articulations, which might be injured, if we got it out piece-meal. All you have to do is, to support the lower end, without jerking it, lest it should drop from the jarring ; while I release the upper part. Then with a good heft, out we get it, with this felt under it, to prevent abrasion. Barnes keeps his eyes on the cliff outside, and will call us at once, if the

crack grows larger. Ah! you fit exactly, as I said you would; with your foot in that nick, what can be better?"

Without a word, I watched his skilful work, as he followed with his tool every curve of nature's bold carving, now brought out into high relief; until he had the other part (bedded obliquely into the rock-wall) almost as free as mine was. Then he inserted one side of the felt, under the mighty back-bones of the monster, and saying—"Now both hands, my clever Tommy!" with the leverage of a bigger tool, which he caught up from the floor, gradually brought out the reluctant mass.

When the whole of it lay on the edge of the niche, (which he had lengthened, to allow for the jut) and was ready to come out, being all detached, he passed a piece of rope along it upon either side, taking advantage of the knuckles of the bones (such as I have often sucked, in ox-tail soup) and making fast at either end, to hold it altogether. Then he rubbed his nose, and looked at me, with a very sweet chuckle; and I feared that he would knock his

bare head against the roof; for he had scarcely had a chance of standing upright, all the time, except just where there was a sort of pudding-basin in the shale stuff.

“Shall we call in Barnes?” he asked; “I am afraid his hands would shake. It looks like a Death’s head, and cross-bones combined, in its present most tantalizing attitude. I thought I heard a crack. My young friend, listen. Run you outside, and reconnoitre; it is impossible for me, under any circumstances, to abandon these bones of rapture now. *Impavidum ferient ruinæ*. But I beg you to try a little *alibi*. Go out, and see how things look; and if all is serene, return, and help me.”

“No, sir,” I answered; “if there was a crack, no doubt it was Barnes cracking nuts outside. He fills his pockets with Brazilian nuts, fit only for a blacksmith. If you are ready, sir, so am I. Why, it is not half so big as I am.”

“It weighs, Tommy, at least five times your weight. We will put up this plank, and slide it down. Here it comes gently! What, you here, Laura! You see, if I don’t tell your Ma—

as the children say to one another. Let it drop, Tommy, let it drop, if it hurts you."

For whether from sudden alarm about Laura, or the damage done to my own wrist, my end of the mass slipped away from me, and turned ; and the three-inch plank, we were guiding it down, flew up, as if struck by a cannon-ball, and just missing my head knocked away the main bearers of the roof above us. I saw a great mass coming down upon Laura, and before I could think, I had her in my arms and under me ; then a roar, and a flash of light, and black darkness came, and the last sense of spreading arms over her.

When I came to know what I was about again, lo there I was lying in a bed of sea-weed ; with my head supported by a soft smooth arm coming under the curls at the back of my neck, and my breast laid bare to the wind of the sea, and a great deal of water gone into it. Moreover, I seemed to be dirty all over, as if I had been rolled along a knife-board ; and a quantity of grime was in my mouth, so that I could hardly speak for grit.

"I don't seem to know where I am," I gasped.

"Never mind about that, till by and by;" a soft voice whispered into my ear; and soft lips felt nice, and warm, upon my cheek. "Are you better, oh, darling Tommy, are you better?"

"I should be, if I could blow my nose," I said; "there is nothing the matter with me, except that. But what is all this roaring noise, if you please? Is it coming down again? If it does, I am done for."

"No, dear! There is nothing coming down at all, except the waves of the sea. There is a heavy ground-swell. But none of it can come near you, dear Tommy."

"The Professor said there would be a ground-swell," I answered, with some nerve of memory touched. "There seems to be nothing, that he does not know."

"He seems not to have known everything, this time. Did he know that the rock would come down upon Laura, and must have killed her, but for you?"

"The rock come down? Oh, I remember now! Something came down. But it was all

my fault. And perhaps I have killed her. Oh, please to let me die, if I have killed beautiful Laura ! ”

“ Hush ! You are not to excite yourself. You have not killed Laura ; you have saved her life. She is not hurt at all, or at least very little ; not a quarter so much as you are, my poor darling. Here, you are to take this, as soon as you can swallow.”

She put some vessel to my lips ; and I saw large dark eyes, and a trembling smile, and fair cheeks flowing with a flood of tears. Then I swallowed something warm, and said—“ Oh, you must be Laura ! ”

“ No, I am not. I am Laura’s mother—your dear lady, as you used to call me. Now, rest a few minutes, and you will be better. You must not try to get up, by yourself ; nor even with my help, till the Professor has examined you. He is up at the Inn, with darling Laura, who cannot be induced to go home, until she hears that you are well enough to come with us. I sent a boy for him, the moment you revived. Here he comes. He will soon tell us

all about you. Don't be afraid ; you are a hero, not a goose."

I felt more like a goose, and one going to be cooked, when my learned patron, after some kind words, began to make search for my injuries. By calling, he was a physician ; and if he had only stuck to art, and discarded science, made the most of his talents, and the least of his genius, and preferred the twinkles to the broad light of knowledge ; doubtless he would have been making his twenty thousand a year, with a baronetcy, and the fame that breathes its last with its owner. And the laying of his fingers on my poor body would have cost fifty guineas, instead of nothing but some groans.

"The more he groans, the better I am pleased with him," he observed with the spirit of the true philosopher ; "it proves that his sufferings are capable of expression, and that he has power to put them into form. The greater the damage to his outward husk,—for he could not expect to come off unhurt—the smaller the injury to the kernel of this Tommy. His bones are as

sound as my Deino-Saurian's, which rolled on my feet, and most happily inflicted, without receiving injury. There, now, my dear friend, did you feel that?"

"I should rather think that I did," groaned I; "oh, it was dreadful! It was as bad as the way the four Professors poked at me. I hope you won't have to do that again, sir."

"No, I think not," he replied, in a tone which would have been blessed, if less dubious; "the fact of his perceiving my light touch there convinces me, Lady Twentifold—so far as we may trust observations, which we have not verified—that he has taken no internal harm, in the part that was most exposed to it. The brattice came down and protected his head—being clear of the fall myself, I could see the beginning of the accident at that end. The main weight fell upon his back just here—you told me that you wished to have everything stated, as plainly as I could state it, otherwise I would not give you these details—and when we dug him out, the main weight was there still. I rejoice to assure you, that he will be none the

worse, after a week or two of good nursing. Any frame of stiff construction would probably have been broken; but our dear young friend, this heroic youth Tommy, has a frame of unusual elasticity, partaking rather of the pterotic character, and his internal organs are adapted to it. But I would not advise, that he should walk as yet, or attempt any movement not absolutely needful. We will send for the cushions of your carriage, if you please, and lay them on these planks, and our Tommy on the top; and then with the strong arms of Barnes, and my own, we will take our young hero to the waggonette. You may thank him for the safety of your dear child. I was too far away, to be of any use. You will candidly acquit me of all blame, I am sure. Your daughter disobeyed me, in entering the place; and even after that, there would have been no disaster, except for the accident to our young friend's wrist. All the rest of the excavation is still firm, as you see."

"I will have every bit of it pulled down to-morrow, now that you have got all you want, Professor. And to blame you, would be

almost as wicked, as to fail to thank the Almighty."

I know that she discharged that latter duty ;
but I doubt, if she ever acquitted herself so
thoroughly, as to the former point.

CHAPTER VII.

PLEASANT, AND UNPLEASANT THINGS.

EVERYBODY said, without one exception, unless it were that of some low-minded fellow, that I had performed a most gallant, valiant, and you might fairly term it, heroic deed. But I could not at all take this view of it myself; not only because of that modesty which sometimes suffers misunderstanding, from its terror of becoming conspicuous, but also because I had acted purely from instinct, and without two thoughts. If there had been two thoughts, the first would have been to save Laura—an act of mere selfishness; and the second would have been to save myself—an act of almost equal selfishness. However, casuistry is not in my line, and if people chose to think me a very fine fellow, I

should have been guilty of self-assertion, if I had kept on contradicting them.

Nobody was allowed to contradict me, for at least a fortnight; and everything was done to anticipate my wishes. I lay on a beautiful couch, and read novels, for fear of any harm to my system; and although there was a great deal of "*débris*" in them, and most of the heroes had been pushed off cliffs, and some of them overwhelmed in caverns, I did not find one who had saved, at a stroke, his lady-love's bones, and his own, and a dragon's. And the best thing of all was, that Laura made a point of coming to see me, three times every day. Her mother was generally with her, it is true; but there are methods of exchanging glances, over kind shoulders, or behind beloved backs; and sometimes Lady Twentifold was called away, while her daughter must be left, just to say good-bye.

In another thing also, I was very lucky. My affection for my mother was intense and deep: but to be assured of her welfare was enough just now. By no means did I want her indefatigable love, and assiduous devotion, at this crisis.

Lady Twentifold had written, in the kindest manner, to suggest that she could come to assuage anxiety, and contribute her tender care; but the letter had arrived at "Placid Bower"—as we had beautifully named our house—to distinguish it from the Boiling scenes—one hour after my dear mother's hasty departure for the port of Liverpool. By the earlier post, she had received a letter from the Manager of a "Sailor's Refuge" there, requesting her to set off by the next Express train, if she wished to see her dear brother William alive. This was that very same Uncle Bill of mine, who had tossed me through the ceiling, as above recorded; and partly in consequence of that exploit, had betaken himself to the briny waves again, and had long been supposed to be lying beneath them. That, however, he had forborne to do, contriving on the contrary to keep above them, during many adventurous years; until he was landed quite lately at Liverpool, in the last stage, as every one declared, of a long low African fever. He had not heard a word of our changes in life, but had given the

address of the Soap-works, and the new Boiler had forwarded the letter.

My mother's kind heart was affected deeply ; and she left home in such a hot flurry, with nothing but a few clothes and her cheque-book, that she never even thought of leaving any address, or orders concerning her letters. And we might have heard none of all this, for a month—for she was rather superstitious about sending bad news, and had not heard a word about my accident—except for the kindness of Miss Windsor, who happened to call at “Placid Bower,” as she often did for a good luncheon. The cook gave her this, with much good-will, being troubled with the knife-boy (who had tried to kiss her, and did not care, how or when, he came home at night), as well as in distress, about her wages, and the emptiness of the beer-cask ; and then Polly, like the mistress of the house, sat down, and examined the outsides of all the letters ; not in any spirit of curiosity, in which, (as she confessed) she had always been too deficient, but to find whether she could be of any service. Knowing Lady Twentifold's letter at

a glance, not so much by the post-mark, or the crest, as its "unstudied air of aristocracy," she went to my four-legged desk, and wrote a letter beginning—"Dear Tommy" (which some one far superior to herself considered a very great liberty indeed, and had a great mind not to call me Tommy any more), and covering four sides, with a galloping scrawl, all about nothing, except that my mother had been suddenly called away to Liverpool, and no one knew when she would come back again.

I endeavoured to reconcile my mind to this, trusting that my excellent mother would take good care of herself, as she generally did, and feeling how very much better it was, that her mind should be free from anxiety, until I could announce my own recovery. And for this latter blessing I was not in any haste, finding all my medicaments wonderfully nice, and clinical treatment exceedingly fine.

"When are you coming downstairs, old chap?" Sir Roland inquired, in his brisk short style, when I had endured with all resignation a fortnight of these therapeutics. "The world

won't stand still for the best of us, you know. The Professor has packed up his bones, and is going. He can't hope for any more big lizards; and of this one he has got every bit of scurf left, I believe. Wonderful, what fancies people have! If you offered him the Blue Ribbon, not a smile would appear on his philosophic countenance. But offer him a thread from the tail, or the *pelvis*, or the *pubes*, or whatever he calls it, of some hideous beast that died when mirrors were invented, and you'll get a smile worth walking ten miles to see. I tried to take a rise out of him the other day, with a big marrow-bone I mashed up, and stuck together inside out; and I rode twenty miles, to put the product into a petrifying well, for three days and nights. I made sure of having him; it looked so natural, and every bit of join was sawdered over with the drip-stuff.

“‘New specimen from our cliff, sir,’ I said. ‘I hope it may induce you to prolong your stay.’

“And really for a moment, he looked puzzled, and I made sure of having fetched him. Then

he stood up, and put his hand upon my shoulder ; and you should have seen the laugh in his great eyes.

“ ‘I hope, my young friend, you will retire from the House, when the question of our next grant is discussed,’ he said ; ‘I shall put this in a case, as a great curiosity ; and label it “*Specimen of a Conservative M.P.*” The inversion, and the petrification, are the leading features of the type.’

“ ‘What do you think of that now, Tommy ?’

“ ‘Well, I think that it served you most splendidly right, and will teach you how to play tricks with great men. I should like to have seen you, with his strong hand on your shoulder.’”

“ ‘Come, if you can laugh like that, you heartless radical, there can’t be much the matter with your inner parts, unless it is your heartless heart. And very little wrong with your outward either, to judge by the colour on your cheeks, when I came in. You were as bright, as ‘a red red rose newly blown in June.’”

“ ‘Because your sweet sister had just been with me,” thought I ; but I only said, “Yes, I

am a little better. My strength is coming back to me gradually, I believe. With your dear mother's wonderful kindness, and the help of a good constitution, I hope to be toddling about as usual, before very long. But Professor Megalow says, that I must shun most carefully every possible form of excitement."

"No doubt of that. But you appeared to me to be in a state of excitement, when I came in. And there was somebody going down the other stairs, I thought; a quick light foot it seemed to be."

"There are so many echoes in this house," I answered, throwing one weary arm across my face; "if you had only got to keep in one room, and listen to them, hour after hour, as I have got to do, you would find out that a very little thing excites one."

"Well, I beg your pardon, dear Tommy," he replied; "I should be the last to hurry you, I am sure; after all the great things that you have done for us. But I do want you to be about again, for a lot of reasons; if it were only to canvass Larkmount, before they forget your exploit, and

before that very dainty colour has time to get spoilt. All the Larkmount females will be in love with you ; and everything is driven by the thimble there. The Rads are going to be fools enough, I hear, to bring forward an oily fellow, fifty years old, pitted with the small-pox, and with stubby black hair, against your soft carmine, and ambrosial curls. And another thing I forgot to tell you, Counterpaigne will be here to-morrow, or the next day ; and he is such an awful stick over the wine. He thinks himself wronged, with less than two hours of it ; and what I shall do with him, when the Professor is gone, surpasses my imagination. He never says anything, except what he has read in the papers of the morning ; and whatever they have said, he repeats word for word, for he has got a tremendous memory. And he does it all the same, if he has happened to get hold of a Radical journal, before the sound doctrine ; whichever side he gets first, he swallows ; and his stubbornness, pegs him fast to it ; and whatever the other side says is therefore all rubbish, and rot, and roguery. His temper is none of

the best; and that makes it so much harder to get on with him."

"But what can you do with him, all day long, if he is that sort of fellow?" I asked; "surely he must be even worse, before he has read anything at all; because he must want you, to settle his mind."

"Not at all; he would resent it deeply. He must have a thing in type, and take it in slowly, before his opinion—as he calls it—can be formed. And then, I am relieved of him for several hours, and am only too glad to be out of the way, while he marches all over the gardens, and shrubberies, and even the chase—as he calls the home-farm—for hours of spooning with poor Laura."

"What an atrocious thing to do!" I cried, feeling indignation almost lift me from the couch. "It is bad enough to spoil your evenings; but to ruin all her mornings is ten thousand times worse. How can you bring yourself to allow it?"

"I am thankful for the mercies that I thus ensure," he answered, with heartless, and most

infinite levity; "what can be the value of a girl's time, Tommy? And she likes it, of course—for he makes fine speeches. Or if she doesn't like it, why she ought to do so, and the sooner she learns the way the better. She will have to put up with him, all day long, as soon as they are married, which it is high time now to settle. I may tell you, in confidence, that Counterpaigne is just the fellow to be made a fool of; and so we must fix him, before that happens. Not that he is any great catch, you know. He will take quite as much as he brings; and his family is ever so much newer than ours is, for he only belongs to us in the female line. Still, this 'alliance' (as the cads of the papers call it) has been determined on, for very good reasons; and it plugs up a leak in some wicked old will."

"A very wicked will, I call it, a very wicked will, and a still more wicked deed—to bind two persons together for life, without asking whether they suit each other. If you were a beautiful, clever, sweet-tempered, warm-hearted, pure-minded, and lovely young lady, without a particle of selfishness, or two thoughts of a trumpery

coronet—how would you like to marry Lord Counterpagne, taking him according to your own account? His temper is bad, to begin with—and to end with too, for any one who cares about his sister's welfare. Roly, bad temper is the curse of life. Those who are plagued with it, should live apart, or only with those they are afraid of; unless they have enough of self-knowledge, and enough strong will, to quench it utterly. Has the Earl of Counterpagne got those?"

"If he has, he has concealed them from me, thus far. He thinks his bad temper a very fine thing. But, my dear Tommy, what concern is this of yours?"

"None, I suppose; because she is not my sister. But I will say my say, and have done with it; and you may think me an upstart meddler, if you like. All of you have been so kind to me, and above all your dear mother, that I would rather die out of the way, than see a great misery falling upon you. And the greatest misery in all the world is, for a gentle, sweet, loving, and sensitive creature, to be shackled

for life to a man, conceited, stuck-up, narrow-minded, cold-hearted, selfish, and above all blacktempered. And if you bring such a thing to pass, you will rue it to the last day of your life, dear Roland."

"Come, come, he is not half so bad as all that?" Sir Roland replied, with more self-command, than I expected from him. "Counterpaigne is a gentleman, in his way, and only requires humouring. Tommy, I thank you for your warning, which is uncommonly impressive, and disinterested"—here he fixed his piercing eyes on mine, but I was not thinking of myself at all, in the larger interests my own words had aroused; "but you have talked a great deal too much for your good. Go to sleep, and allow me to consider—what comes next."

He was going to say something harsher, as I saw. But his manly sense of my condition, and of the service I had been happy enough to render, withheld him from speaking out his mind, just then. And I was glad, when he was gone, and I could think things over.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WELFARE OF THE FAMILY.

A GREAT double blow fell upon me now, far worse than the fall of the rocks upon my back—for then I had the sweetest of comfort in my arms—to wit the departure of Professor Megallow, and the arrival of the Earl of Counterpaigne. If the learned Professor had been labouring for the union of the two most interesting creatures yet extinct, with the prospect of neozoic forms, big enough to exhaust even his teratology, he could scarcely have exhibited higher powers of match-making, than he now had exerted for my benefit. He looked upon me as an acolyte of science—because of my manual services—and took any failure of mine as a defeat, henceforth, of that great power. More-

over, his heart was as soft as a child's, and as versatile, and as abundant; and the dry humour (which knowledge of the world had spread over the depth of feeling) was no more than the lid of the well of tears.

What a different nature filled, or tried to fill, his chair, at the plenteous table of the Towers, next day! Lord Counterpagne had a great many good points; he believed so himself; and who am I to contradict him? But he went a great deal further than that—he believed that he had no bad ones; and upon that matter, a very feeble arguer need not have feared to tackle him. He was soft, without being soft-hearted, stubborn without any real firmness, and slow-witted, without solidity. Far be it from me, to make the worst of him, because of his presumption about Laura; his own face was enough to give a clear account of him; and how can he object to that?

I was heartily glad, not for my own sake, but because it showed the good taste of sweet Laura, that she strove her very utmost—without transgressing the venial limits of truth—to keep

liberally out of the way of this noble lord. My firm belief is, that she disliked him, with a loftier disgust than I could cherish. For I did believe that he had some good points; and I made it my business to put these before her, with the noblest candour possible.

“Ah well!” she said, “I am surprised, that you should recommend him so. I thought you had more—more insight, I think the fashionable word seems now to be; as well as more, I will not say regard, but consideration for me.”

It was as much as I could do,—when she spoke thus, and looked at me, as if her last friend was gone,—to forbear from a good burst of anger, and sorrow, and (the hardest of all things to keep under) great love. But I did not presume, for a moment, to hope that I should find the proper answer yet; supposing I were bold enough to show that last, in any plainer style than that of sighs, and looks, and forbearance to look, or to speak sometimes, and little unaccountable changes of colour, and very soft tones, and an evident contempt of all low considerations, and cold subjects. With all these, and a

thousand more, I had been keeping my distance from others, and from her before them; yet striving imperceptibly to steal nearer, as a child sidles towards a shy bird, with salt.

"You ought to feel very much obliged to me," I answered, "considering how you are situated, for trying to make the best of everything."

At this her eyes flashed, as I meant them to do; and she put up her lips in a resolute way.

"I am not situated at all," she replied; "what a word to use about me! All the world seems to have made up their minds, that I have no will of my own whatever. And you, who might at least have been hoped to know me better, seem to be contented with the general mistake."

"Ah, I wish that we were young again," I couldn't help sighing, and taking her hand as I said it; "and could talk as we used to do, at the sea-side. We never had any misunderstandings then."

"And we won't have any now," she answered kindly, with a dear little sigh (as my ears told my heart); "after all you have done for me, how

could I endure it? Only, I don't understand why you should take such a violent fancy to Lord Counterpagne. We had better drop the subject altogether. It is scarcely one for us to talk about."

"If anybody knows, you ought to know that it is not a pleasant theme for me," I said, with a look at which she blushed, and turned away; "if I hate anybody on earth, it is his lordship!"

"Well!" she exclaimed, gazing at me with astonishment, but certainly no anger in her clear brown eyes; "I thought you had agreed to drop the subject. And after all your praises, to say such a thing as that! Why, you must dislike pure virtue! But I have been forgetting that I keep my cousin waiting. I ought to have met him, by the fountain long ago. And his dignity is hurt, if I am not there first. Now, you must keep quiet; and not walk about so much. Since the good Professor went, you never lie down at all. And he made you lie down, all day long! Good-bye now, till dinner-time."

"I am not going to stick in here," I cried,

as she hurried lightly across the lawn, and my words seemed too late to overtake her, "while that muff of a lord has you, all to himself. The idea of his showing his nasty huffs to you! As soon as I am well, I'll have it out with him, as sure as my name's Tommy. Let me see him dare to pull his long face out at you; and if I don't double up his counterpane, if I don't make a Milord Blanket of him——"

However, it was useless to go on like that, for she never looked back, to encourage me. My nature, moreover, is not pugnacious, until the very last straw is piled upon my back, or peace is more certain to bring thumps, than war. My lord had been a little supercilious to me, when I tried to save Roly from this lonesome plague; still, there had been nothing that I could show offence at, although I might take it inwardly; and when I spoke of Bill Chumps, as my earliest friend, he had shown some fine feeling, and real good-will. And now, when I tried to turn things over, calmly and fairly in my mind, and put aside hopeless wishes, I found it very hard to make right with myself—

as a gentleman is bound to do—my own line of behaviour. When I speak of myself as a gentleman, of course I do not pretend to be one “of the gentry”—as some people call those who are born of good position in the country, and so forth—but only to convey that, by education, association, and avoidance of low things, I now might claim to be measured by that high standard; though a long way from coming up to it.

And taking this view, I was forced to acknowledge, that I must not go on as I should like to do, and might be said—without any power of denial—to have already begun to do. I found myself treated with extraordinary kindness, by people of a far higher rank than myself, for a number of reasons, which need not be recounted, but had all worked up to this fine result; and by means of this confidence on their part, my behaviour was become of great importance to them. I do not refer now to national questions, matters of science, or politics, or even the use of my special faculties; but to the nearer and dearer home-interests, involving the welfare of

the family. And being still very young, and of no experience, I puzzled my head, in trying vainly to discover, what was the right thing for me to do. My conscience seemed to tell me, that I ought to run away, and let everything take its course without me; and this I was very near doing, once or twice. But before I could pack up my trunk (which was a big one) my heart stood firmly in the way; and whether it persuaded my mind, or not, is more than I can tell; but certainly my mind, with a good show of reason, supported it. Why should the loveliest, and sweetest, and best, of all maidens in the world be sacrificed, for an object so low—from a high point of view—as a bag of dirty money, or a strip of land, still dirtier? Much happier would it have been for her—with her warm loving nature, and sensitive heart—once for all, to have been crushed in the cave, than slowly, and coldly, and consciously, to be overwhelmed, and thus buried alive, by the burden of the one, who should truly be her light, and life, and liberty. To prevent that, most clearly was my first duty.

And while I was proving to my conscience this—which pure inexperience alone could excuse it, for not having understood long ago—it came to my knowledge, that Lord Counterpaigne was not, (in other ways than those already mentioned as unsuitable) fit to be trusted with the sacred love, and pure heart of any good maiden. Into this I shall not enter, any more than I can help; for the discussion of such matters (which even ladies sometimes taunt us with avoiding) can cure nobody, and may taint many. Enough, that it quenched all further doubt (which became at once unmanly squeamishness) as to my duty, towards him and her; and would have made me loathe the sight of him near Laura, even if she had been nothing to me.

“Tommy, you are not in your usual spirits,” Sir Roland said to me, as he sat in the chair of hospitality, after the ladies had retired, with the Earl on his right hand, and me on his left; “I fear that you are walking too much, my dear boy, before you have got your strength up again. If you do that, the Radical candidate

for Larkmount will get all the fellows pledged to him, before I can even show you."

"He is thinking too much about his election;" Lord Counterpaign remarked, with that long slow chuckle, which proved his enjoyment of his own poor wit; "and from what I have seen in the papers to-day, he will have a lot of questions to answer."

"About the cession of Gibraltar, and the total abandonment of India," Sir Roland answered, with a wink at me. "I saw that you were deep in that subject, my cousin; and I hope that you found it suit your taste."

"Justice is justice," the Earl replied; "and narrow considerations should not be allowed to blind us, as against the larger view. For instance, how should we like the Spaniards to be in permanent occupation of Dover castle, and the mouth of the Thames? And, to a Spanish mind, Gibraltar combines the advantages of both those positions. I confess that I reflected seriously over the forcible manner in which that was put. And supposing that I had been by birth a Spaniard, which is very easily conceivable——"

“Not at all. You are not a bit like a Spaniard, and you had better not reflect as one, until you are re-conceived. We have got those places, and we mean to keep them; as the Spaniards would keep Dover castle, if their ancestors had taken it, and they could stick to it. The electors of Larkmount are Englishmen; and they would never have Tommy, if he talked such stuff. To-morrow, you’ll get hold of a Tory paper first, and read all about our glorious heritage, and the paramount duty of keeping it intact. Here, my dear fellow, take another glass of port. You require it for your constitution.”

His lordship looked angry, but did as he was bidden, for he was heartily afraid of his strong-minded cousin; and to turn the conversation, I broke in, saying to Sir Roland,

“To-morrow, if it suits you, I shall be most happy, to go over, and see those highly interesting people. Your Twentibury business comes on next Friday, and you go up to take your seat next Monday. But if I am to have the honour of being returned, it cannot be for some three

months yet. And when you go to London, I think of going too. I am rather uneasy about my mother. I have not heard from her, for a long time ; and I don't even know, where she is at present."

"Very well ; you shall come up with me, and be back again to practise at the rabbits, for the first. Counter, I mean to educate this Tommy ; and I'll back him to wipe your eye, when the long-tails come in."

"He will have to beat his tutor, before he can do that," Lord Counterpagne answered, with his drawling smile, which never followed any but his own ideas.

And then they began to talk about sporting matters ; such as I had heard of continually, at Oxford, but knew very little of, in any other way.

It grieved me very deeply, as I watched this man (who scarcely ever deigned to consider me at all), to think that I must leave him here with Laura, for I knew not how long, to go sauntering about, and sitting upon benches out of doors, and poking into flowers, or gold and silver fish, and droning all his paragraphs from

the papers into her poor weary ears. Sometimes she would rouse her bright spirit, as I knew, and give him such an answer, as of right should do him good ; but the worst of him was, that his wits were not quick enough to enter into anything that went against himself. And Laura, on the whole, was so gentle, and long-suffering, and desirous to keep any visitor happy, and herself of so lively a disposition, that she seemed too likely to try to make the best of him,—far more than he deserved, and nearly as much as he required. All this made it more, and more, miserable for me, as the Monday for my farewell drew nigh, and there came no letter from my mother, to relieve me of that sad necessity.

CHAPTER IX.

BECAUSE HE HAD NO PITY.

SUNDAY was a very lovely day, and people came, from nearly two miles off, to church. The church was just outside the eastern lodge, at the end of the finest avenue; and it was very little larger than that lodge, and scarcely looked so serious. But the parson was a very worthy man to preach, and he often said things that could be talked about. So that any people, who were staying in the neighbourhood, for the sake of the air, or the views, or the moderate price of meat and butter, or even the salt water, were glad (if the Sunday was fine, and a fly could be found, at a reasonable figure) to be able to say, before they left the neighbourhood, that they had heard the famous preacher, Mr.

Arkles, one of the few who can still be heard *gratis*.

Naturally enough, the pews belonging to the Towers, and its race, were three quarters of the church. But if any respectable people came in, and looked about, as if they were used to cushions, and objected to the free seats, which had none (and in fact had no room for them, being about as wide, and rough, as a kidney-bean stick) there never was any hesitation, on the part of the Officials of the Towers, from the housekeeper downwards (according to the dresses of the persons that came in, and their power of conveying their importance by their looks) to push open any door, with some yards of room inside it, and nod solemnly, yet Christianly, over the top rim of their Prayer-books. In the chief pew of state, there was seldom anybody, to be found at Morning Service, except a few visitors at the Towers; not from any turn on the part of Lady Twentifold against Mr. Arkles—though the public very generally put it down to that—but simply because she had so many parishes, in all of which

she liked the clergymen ; and she felt it a duty, in the proper round of Sundays, to make calls upon all of them, in right order, and in church. But, of a Sunday evening, when the dinner-time allowed, and the trees of the avenue dropped no drop, all the "cover-parties," (as the old butler called us, for whom he had to lay the table) used to march to the little old church—for my lady would have no carriage out on a Sunday evening—and behave ourselves, according to our nature, there.

Upon this Sunday, which was to be my last with Laura, for I could not tell how long, Sir Roland had driven his mother away, in the light mail-phaeton to some far-off church, but the young lady stayed at home, to attend to the visitors, and take them to the parish church. Lord Counterpagne had a great mind not to go ; and it would have been better for him, as it happened, if he had persisted in this irreligious tone ; but even his stupidity was beginning to perceive, what a dreadful condition I was in, concerning Laura ; and that she would not have me disdainfully spoken of, when I was away,

and could not defend myself. And these considerations made him go to church.

Everything went on, as well as need be, until we had got some distance into the First Lesson. I had seen a big weather-beaten man come in, at the beginning of the *Venite*, forgetting himself, for the moment, so that he kept his broad hat on his head, until he was reminded where he was. This made me look at him with more attention, and wonder what had brought him hither; for he seemed to be not of the neighbourhood. He refused to come up to the grade of the pews; though the footmen of the Towers cast glances at him, as if he were worthy to come in with them—which they never did to any below a tradesman, or a farmer—and when he took his hat off, he put it on a stick, and sat down upon the free bench, and propped himself up. Then he stood up, at leisure, with his staff in his hand, and began to survey the congregation. The clergyman looked at him, as much as to say—"You are not behaving very well, my friend;" but he never returned his gaze, nor seemed to know that there was

any clergyman. His manifest desire was, to see everybody that happened to be inside those four walls; and a kindred curiosity arose, on my part, to know all about him. I saw that he was stout, and at least of middle age, with a ruddy face, and grizzled whiskers, and that candid expression of a puzzled state of mind, which generally shows an honest nature. It was clear, that he had not found what he sought, though his eyes were especially turned to our high pew. He looked at Miss Twentifold, and he looked at me; and I could scarcely help smiling at his disappointment, as I watched his lips, and could almost hear him say to himself—"No that is not the man."

Meanwhile, the Earl of Counterpagne was lounging at the back of our deep pew; for he was very lazy, and had taken a great deal to drink last night, as I knew by his behaviour at the billiard-table; and being out of sight of Mr. Arkles, and his flock, he was stopping his ears with his dainty fingers, to shut out the "horrible row," as he called it, of their hearty, but untutored chanting. And throughout the read-

ing of the Psalms, there he stayed, putting up his feet ; which I could see, vexed Laura.

The First Lesson happened to be the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, and Mr. Arkles began to read it beautifully ; for he had a fine voice, and loved brave English. But before he had gone very far, my lord, being weary of his lounge, stood up to take a stretch, and have a look at the inferior people ; among whom there were some bright comely girls, not unwilling to catch a great nobleman's glance. The clergyman read in a loud clear voice, as if himself were the prophet—

“ The man, that hath done this, shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold ; because he did this thing ; and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David—— ”

“ Thou art the man.”

A far louder voice than Mr. Arkles' shouted these words, like thunder ; and the big man pointed his staff, at the pale face of Lord Counterpaigne.

“ Yon stands the man, that made a harlot of my daughter.”

“Churchwardens, I call upon you to remove that person ;” the clergyman said, as soon as he recovered, from the breathless astonishment that filled the church.

Two elderly men arose, to do his bidding ; but before they could get near him, the big man clapped his broad hat on his head, and walked out slowly through the open door, by which he had been standing.

Then my lord turned round to us, with a very ghastly smile, and said aloud, “It is only some poor madman ; but he ought to be taken into custody.”

Laura, who had become as pale as death, shrank from him to my side ; and I took her hands, in fear that she might faint ; but she did not do that, though her hands trembled coldly in mine, and a large tear rolled down either fluttering cheek.

To the rest of the service we paid small heed, though going through the forms of it ; and it was all in vain, that our companion tried to catch our glances, and to smile it off.

We three were the last to leave the church ;

and Mr. Arkles very kindly followed us from the vestry, (into which he had called the churchwardens) and told us at the churchyard gate, how sorry he was for the disgraceful scene, and the alarm of the young lady. Then he shook hands with her, and lifted his hat very stiffly to Lord Counterpagne, and left us at the eastern lodge.

As we entered the avenue, leading to the Towers, which was more than half a mile in length, the Earl began to walk, at a pace very different from his wonted dawdle, and seemed to be casting his eyes, in a nervous manner, between the great trunks of the trees. The servants of the house were far in front, sometimes in sight, and sometimes hidden by the dips of the land, and the turns of the road, whose beauty he did not appreciate. This, however, I was capable of doing; and I did not see why we should be in a hurry, because his lordship was perhaps in a fright. So I said, to break the solemn silence (which seemed to have fallen upon us somehow, after a little weak talk about the weather),

“Why should we go at such a headlong rate? The day is very warm; and why should we endeavour to beat it, at its own business?”

Laura, who was walking between us, gave me a sweet little glance, almost the first she had ventured to exchange with me, since that occurrence in the church; but Lord Counterpagne said—

“Oh, very well. I forgot that you had not recovered your activity, Upmore; after all that business, when you were the pillars of Hercules, or somebody? Who was it—Atlas? You are fresh from Oxford. A remarkable instance of the unexpected. Your principal gift is of flight, I believe; though you have never favoured me with a specimen.”

His manner was spiteful, to the last degree; possibly because I had not sided with him, throughout what I considered the confusion of a blackguard.

“Your lordship may envy me that gift,” I said, with more irritation than I ought to have shown, in the presence of gentle Laura; “but I have never yet used it, to escape those I have injured.”

Before I could answer his furious stare, a man of great substance appeared, from behind a big tree, and stood before us. In one hand he had the staff, which had given so much point to his Scriptural denunciation; and he held the other open, with great fingers bent, and a rapid growth of tendency, towards the collar of the Earl.

"Mind what you're about," I said, going up to him, with every expectation of being tossed into the bole of the tree, that had concealed him; and I pointed to Laura; and he said—

"Roight, lad; teak t' yoong leddy awaa, if tho wool. A foo pri'ate words, is aw' oi ston here fur."

"Shall I come back, to help you?" I called out to Lord Counterpaigne, as I hurried off with Laura, to get her out of sight of it; and although he was in a very low ebb of heart (as his face, and legs showed), he had the courage to say—

"No. This is a private affair—an attempt to sponge on me. Fellow, take your hands off."

"To sponnge on e, eh?" I heard the loud voice roar; "ool't lack a mony sponnges, afore oi've a dooed wi' e."

And desirous as I was to know, how this was to happen, I durst not look round ; because of darling Laura, who was terrified so that I had no resource, but to help her along, with both comfort and support.

“ Oh, what does that mean ? ” she asked, with the saddest forebodings in her tearful eyes ; and I answered,

“ It must be the way, the grasshoppers are always going on, in this hot weather. It is the way they make love, you know, to one another.”

“ It sounds much heavier than a grasshopper,” she whispered, as a yet louder stroke awoke the echoes ; “ and if that’s the way they make love,—I am sure, it is not at all what I should like.”

“ Oh that I knew what way of doing it you do like ! ” I murmured even in that crisis, and she seemed not to hear me, except with her cheeks.

It struck me, that she should have been more anxious, for me to hurry back to the succour of the Earl. But, (either from not knowing what was toward, or from a readiness to keep me out of danger, or even perhaps some resignation to

the code of justice) she took me quite up to the steps of the terrace, before she could at all dispense with me. And though I ran back at full speed, with three or four men after me, to the spot where I had left Lord Counterpaigne; there was no evil-doer there, for us to apprehend, unless it was my lord himself. And we found him in such a very sad condition, that we were all afraid to lift him up.

CHAPTER X.

PERFIDY.

ANYTHING of that kind makes me sad ; because I am in such a struggle to believe, what everybody now has settled long ago—and the younger he is, the more he feels it—that all our forefathers, in comparison with us, were low savages, fools, and brute beasts of the earth. And doubtless, to this perception of the nature, from which we ourselves descend—or rather, by some gift (more marvellous a thousandfold than mine) ascend, tower above their wretched loins, and soar into the seventy-seventh heaven, or at least as much as we have left of it undemolished—to this pure disdain of the brutes who begot us, are due our strong yearning towards, and reverend faith in, the great father of us all,—a little snail, without a head.

But so long as my nature is so disloyal to that great All-father, as to want a hat; thoughts will come into that superfluous, and therefore universally weak, part of the present human being, which goes into the chimney-pot—evolved, alas! as a penalty for that disloyalty. Oh, that Father Mollusk could only have foreseen a tithe of the woes, which the evolution of a head would entail upon his headstrong descendants! Unwise was he in his generation; and some Satan must already have been *in posse*, or why did Mother Mollusk—— But such questions are not Science; which allows no question of her bashful physiology.

Happier would have been my position now, if the survival of the fittest had omitted me, or at least had restored me to the patriarchal state of headless existence, at the bottom of the sea. All birds are now proved to have been evolved from lizards; which accounts for my complicity with the Saurian race, and their influence upon my destiny. And another piercing genius has certified us, that the canine race, being threatened with extinction, after milliards of years, by hydro-

phobia,* lay down, and ecnēsted the protoplastic flea; who took to his labour of love, with congenital tripudiation, and rescued the author of his origin from impending annihilation *thus*.

Hydrophobia was the product of *ennui*, of lying chained up in the sun, and meditating too profoundly, as all dogs do. Thus, a dread of the depths of reflection was instituted in the mind of Towser, which developed, in the intellect of his descendants, into hydrophobia; and must have undone them to the ends of their tails, without the evolution of the genial flea. He, with an infusion of fresh blood, sprang forth, developed, his saltatory powers, by development of long legs—or *vice versâ*, for I am not sure which way that link goes,—and has ever since satisfied the exigency that developed him, by preserving every son of a dog thence generated, from the paraphrenitis of nothing to scratch.

“*Acrior illum*

Cura donat.”

* Alas that the newest, and perhaps noblest, of all scientific discoveries—the doctrine of creation by ecnēsis—cannot be claimed by an English, or even—as *a priori* should have been—a learned Scotch professor, but passes to the credit of a French *savant*, hitherto unknown, but now immortal.

I thought of all this, (though without any room for the moral lesson it so well conveys) as I came upon old *Grip*, spread out largely in the sun, upon the pet flower-bed, upon the pet lawn, of that elegant *Rus in urbe*, as the house-agent called it—"Placid Bower." *Grip* had caught a lizard, which he did not care to eat, getting more in the trencher way, than he could away with, and finding his teeth more and more like a hay-rake, which has done its work upon a score of farms, by August. But it was against all the principles of his life, and the time-honoured policy of the nation he belonged to, to let go a hold he once had laid. And yet, as I could see by the twitching of his shoulder, and munch of his lip, he could scarcely tell how to defer the crisis, and climax, of a thoroughly exhaustive scratch. For no one durst wash him, except myself; and I had never been near him, for six hot weeks.

Poor old chap! It made all my low spirits go lower, to think that he could never more hear me, or see me, until I came as nigh him, as the length he once could jump. There was no need

to chain him up any more, for fear of his flying at some visitor. He had lived in the world such a length of time now, that he cared not to strive any more against vice ; unless it came meddling with his own dear belongings. All that old interest, of sticking up for honesty, he had long since resigned to his Oxford son, *Grapple* ; whom he now approached with great consideration, through the loss of his teeth, and the stiffness of his loins. *Grapple* was bodily as good as *Grip* had been, in his fighting hey-day, neither was his pluck inferior ; but the difference between them, in warmth of heart, and faith, and steadfast loyalty, was almost as great as that grown up, between our grandfathers and ourselves.

But I did not expect, well aware as I was of his staunch, and well-proven fidelity, such warmth, and I might say such wildness of welcome, as the ancient dog afforded me. When I called out "*Grip*," he pricked up his ears, as if he could never more believe them ; and then he turned his poor eyes, spread with film ; and looked at me, as if I were a memory. Beginning to get an idea of some bliss, he slowly arose, and

shook himself; but still with his dull eyes set on me, and a tremulous inquiry of his worn-out tail.

"*Grip*," I said, "*Grip*, what an old stupe you are!" and the sudden joy made a young dog of him. With a mighty bark, such as he never expected to compass again, he leaped up at me, and put his great ossified paws on my breast, and offered me the delicate refreshment of his tongue. Then he capered about, and made such a proclamation, that the servants rushed out; and seeing me rushed back, to get things a little tidy, before they let me in.

I found that my mother was still from home, but expected to come back that night, and had written to have the best bedroom prepared, for an invalid gentleman whom she would bring. This would, of course, be her brother William, of whom I had fully thought to hear as dead, and was greatly pleased to find it otherwise, having kind memories of him, and being uncommonly short of relatives.

As there was still a good piece of daylight, and it seemed dull to sit there by myself, I

resolved to reward the faithful *Grip*, by taking him to see his native land, as he fairly might consider Maiden Lane. So we set forth together to call on Mr. Chumps, who still carried on his nutritious business, and wore the blue apron more stoutly than ever.

“Ha, my lad!” he cried, as I opened the shop-door, which rang a sharp tocsin against beef and mutton-reivers, “you are come just in time for a glass of the fizzing. Have you heard the good news? No, I s’pose not; you’ve been down among all them swells, so long. Wonder almost, you would deign to look us up. Go on into the parlour, with the missus, and our Linda. In ten minutes thirty seconds, I shall put the shutters up, and wouldn’t take ’em down for the Dook, or his Royal Highness. Leastways, I might for H.R.H., if he were going to give a supper-party; but not for his Grace,—won’t have shanks with his legs. Bill will be back in ten minutes; go in, lad.”

In the parlour I found Mrs. Chumps, and her daughter Belinda, and some one else sitting in the corner, who seemed to be doubtful about turning

round, at the sound of my voice, or whatever it might be. The room was rather gloomy, from a balcony over the windows, and the evening now set in; and I thought, what a very shy young lady they have got! Or perhaps, she has had too much tea and cake, and is gone fast asleep in the corner. Not to disturb her, I sat down far away.

“Poor dear!” said Mrs. Chumps, who was looking very well, and you might say ten years younger, with a new front to her hair, and a pink binding to her bosom, and a pair of long-skirted kid-gloves on her lap, and a juvenile jacket with Bohemian scollops, hung behind her, as if she had just pulled it off—which she never could have done, unless born in it. “Poor dear, she naturally feels it so deeply. Oh, Tommy Upmore, you men never feel!”

“Don’t we?” I replied, while wondering who the poor dear was, and what her feelings were. “Mrs. Chumps, if you had only seen the stroke of our eight, that beat Cambridge three years running, when he was compelled to have his wise tooth out, and he had only cut it two years,

I can assure you, and the dentist attributed its state entirely to the way the wind came over his left shoulder, and he begged me to support him with my moral presence, that was how he put it, from his demoralisation——”

“How exactly you do talk like your dear mother!” Mrs. Chumps answered, and rather shut me up; for a Bachelor of Arts ought to do more than that. “I dare say the young man felt that deep enough; and my very best sympathies would be with him, having had out, from first to last, five and forty of ‘em.”

“Ma!” cried Miss Belinda, “Now how can you be so wicked? Mr. Upmore knows better, when he sees them all there. And as for five and forty, and at fifty shillings each—oh, Mr. Upmore, how many have we got?”

“That depends upon circumstances,” I replied, for fear of being wrong, having never been told at Oxford, nor yet by Mr. Cope, nor yet by Dr. Rumbelow, nor any of the Classics I had dealt with yet. “Some have got more, and some have less, no doubt.”

“Never mind that;” Mrs. Chumps resumed,

—“such subjects are meant for young people, or those who have never known what ill health means. But, my dear Tommy, the exact sum is twelve thousand, one hundred, and twenty-five pounds, deducting the duty of three per cent.; and hard it is to have to break the even money. But the poor dear does her best to feel resigned; and the other will have to pay six per cent.; that's one comfort, at any rate. And lucky she may count herself to get it at that reckoning, when the whole twenty-five should have come this way. But there, we must be easier to please, as I'm sure has always been my motto. It will fetch me back to the Church, it will; just when I was going to join the Congregation. They provides in the Church such a tenderness of feeling, as I first learned out of the Catechism. N. or M. it says, and he was both, for his name was 'Nathaniel Matthew,' and he sat at the receipt of Customs. And my Godfather, and Godmother, in my Baptism, wherein I was made an Inheritor. There is no such fine feeling among them Dissenters. Poor dear, it is a sad blow for her! There was tears in her eyes when

she told us of it, and no Mammon of unrighteousness could stop them rolling. My son William, who was first of all the Colleges, is gone to the lawyer now, to give the proper orders, as a Barrister of Lincoln Inn is bound to do. She have just dropped in to talk about the mourning; her dear mamma says black; but her mind is too distressful, and not at all suitable to her bright complexion. Lavender, to my mind, is as deep as need be; and the poor dear never seen him till his funeral, that took place at Highgate yesterday. Give us your opinion, Mr. Upmore, if you please; after coming from all their Ladyships."

"But I don't understand, Mrs. Chumps," I answered, wondering at my own stupidity. "I have not the least idea, what the circumstances are."

"No more don't I, altogether. The whole have come such a sudden blow to us. Belinda, darling, run and fetch the papers. Oh, bless the girl, she's gone without the keys, I do believe!"

Mrs. Chumps laid down her gloves, and began hunting in her pockets; then hurried from the

room upon her daughter's track, while I sat bewildered. Then a sad sigh issued from the gloomy corner, and a melancholy whisper followed it.

"Oh, Tommy, Tommy, will you ever forgive me? For years, you were the chosen of my heart. But—but you slighted me, you know you did; ever since you became so rich, and grand. Whatever has happened is all your own fault—and—and he is so many sizes bigger."

"Polly Windsor!" I exclaimed, going up to look at her. "Have you been there, all that time, and never spoke a word to me?"

"Oh, how could I do it in the presence of spectators? And I was so afraid, that you would make a dreadful scene, when you heard of all this money, and my perfidy. Oh no, you must never call it that, dear Tommy. You would break my poor heart. When I think of the many times, we have settled almost everything, sitting in the cleanest of the cinder-holes—my dress, and yours, and what the breakfast was to be, and when we would have our holidays—and now, oh now, you can be nothing more to

me than the best man, if they even allow you to be that. But I shall insist upon it, and Bill, in return, may settle all about the bridesmaids. Oh, here they come again! For my sake, control your feelings."

I found no difficulty at all in doing this, and was heartily glad when I got at last to the kernel of the story, which was simply this. Mrs. Windsor, who had always spoken very highly of her grand connexions, had an uncle well posted in the Custom-House, and for many years enjoying fine opportunities—such as they seldom seem to get there now—of making due provision, for the benefit of himself. This thoroughly honest old gentleman contrived, by strict economy, and frugal speculations, to die of the value of more than half a plum; and having neither chick nor stick to care for, had left the sum of five and twenty thousand pounds, to be divided equally between his two God-daughters, Polly Windsor, and another yet more distantly related, whose name I have forgotten, but can find out if required. It must not be supposed for a moment, that these facts had

any influence whatever on the heart of our Bill Chumps, which had found its purer half, and more exalted aim, in Polly, ever since he passed his little-go. Still, there were so many of the Windsor family, and soap had been so dull of late, and candles had looked down so much, that the paternal purveyor of meat, (more stubborn of fibre than a Clare-market steak), steeled his heart, and his block-knife, against an alliance, which would cost a fellowship of three hundred pounds a year.

Now this Custom-house money had redressed all that. Bill, who was sure to have his way in the end, as he always had done hitherto, was welcome to have it at once, with the blessing of the slaying and the boiling interest. I alone was to be left in the cold; and sympathy was felt for me, whenever I was present. But no sooner was I gone, than I found out once, by coming back sharply for my walking-stick, that everybody laughed, and made a good joke of it; as if I had been served quite right, and taught not to give myself airs—which I am sure I never did! And this imbued me with such a sense of

wrong, that I declined to be the bride's best man at the wedding, any more than I would be Bill's bridesmaid; and instead of feeling any envy for him, I was sorry; being morally certain that he would pay out for it. For Polly Windsor's mother had a temper of her own; as my dear father (a very sound judge of women) had said in my presence, at least fifty times, when she had taken up her glass with her gloves on, a thing no right-minded woman ever thinks of doing. And such things can seldom, or I might say never, be thrown off in the female line.

However, it was no concern of mine, what sort of a handful Bill Chumps had got; and the public will perceive, that I should not have gone into this question at all, as I have been obliged to do, except for the stories put about, concerning my share in the matter—which, as you see, was none! But no sooner does a man become highly distinguished in politics—as I have been compelled to do—than everything he has handled (from the time he used his coral) is raked up, and ransacked, and rifled against him. Fifty

times, have I been charged at elections, and five times in the House itself, by Irish members, with having jilted the daughter of a brother, and far superior, soap-maker to my father! It is below my dignity, to explain such matters, at the crisis of a very important debate, or even when they are throwing eggs at me. But I do hope, that now having set down the facts, with every word ready to be sworn to, I have heard the last of that vile calumny.

CHAPTER XI.

FREE TRADE.

WHEN one has been wronged by the outer world, the sooner he gets back to the bosom of his family, the likelier will he be to bear it well ; and as soon as the Champagne was finished, I made off. It was useless to be in any hurry with old *Grip*, for he knew how undignified it is to pant, though the formal cause thereof be portliness ; so that by the time we both got back to "Placid Bower," my mother had been at home more than an hour, and had packed Uncle William off to bed.

"Oh, darling Tommy, so weak he is," she told me, as soon as we had heard all about one another, and finished dinner ; "I have only got to hold up my finger, and he does it. And

I know the day when it was—‘Get away, Sophy;’ or ‘Do you think I’d put up with such—something—rubbish?’ or ‘Pack up my traps, if you want to try that game.’ And he seems to have something on his mind, that he cannot quite bring himself to tell me, in the few times when he is at all fit to do it. You must understand, that he goes up and down pretty regular, according to the time of day, whenever the weather keeps side with it. Let him have his breakfast, and get up at his leisure, and have the barber in to shave him, and the doctor to tell him that his pulse is better, and then let him sit, and see the sun come in, even through a shrubbery of chimney-pots, and tell him that he shall have one pipe, supposing he manages to eat his dinner well, and you should see how happy, and how smiling, he lies back. But, as soon as the dusk comes on, and the daylight goes, and we can find no star to show him, but only dull lamps in the narrowness of the streets, then he seems to lose all hope altogether, and turn over on his back, and put his hands together. And he says, ‘Let me

die, Sophy; I should like to die, if I thought there was any hope of going up to heaven.' And I say to him, 'William, don't think of such dreadful things; you are not an old man yet, you know.' And then he looks at me, more pitiful than you could endure, if you had known what a lively boy he was; and he doesn't say another word, as if it was all useless, but sighs till you can see his great ribs shake. Oh, Tommy, he brings me down so low sometimes, that I feel only fit to see a clergyman."

"Mother, you don't look at all like yourself," I answered, for she had always been so pleasant; "you never must give way to such melancholy thoughts. Uncle Bill will soon be better, in this fine air here; and we'll show him the sun through the trees, every morning, and the cock that flies up into the weeping-ash to crow, and the lambs on the hill, that have just been shorn, and play like a lot of white mice in the distance. And then in the evening, if he feels down-hearted, we'll shut out the darkness before it comes on, and light up the gas, and a dozen best candles, and play a game of cards to amuse him, or tell

stories. I can tell stories now, like fun, of all the larks we had at Oxford; and sailors are like children, so easy to amuse."

"Well, my dear," said mother, "we will do the best we can; and your cheerful countenance is enough to scare the blues. But he is not long for this world, I am sure of that—poor William! But I do feel so thankful, that he will die among his friends."

"Nonsense!" I replied, for I had not seen him yet, as he had fallen into light sleep after a painful journey, "you have caught the infection of his lowness, mother. 'However bad the case is, never pull long faces,' as you used to sing to me, when I got caned."

But when I went to look at Uncle Bill, that night, as he lay fast asleep upon his little narrow bed—for nothing would induce him to go into a four-poster—I felt very much afraid that dear mother was too right. I never should have guessed, that this could be my Uncle Bill, of whom I had such playful memories, and to whose buoyant spirits, and frolicsome nature, nothing had ever been known to come amiss. The

great frame was there, and the big tarry hands, and the brown wrists tattooed with a true lover's knot, and a Union Jack, and blue anchors. And I still could descry the short stubby nose, which used to give such a merry lift to his mouth, and the scar on his cheek, that filled up when he laughed, as to my recollection he was generally doing. For if ever there had been a man who was fond of his joke, it was my Uncle William. But, alas! there were very few more for him now.

In the morning, I carried his bit of breakfast up, as my mother had arranged it on a little tea-tray; but he took a long time to make out who I was, though my mother, of course, had said a great deal about me.

"Tommy? What Tommy? I remember lots of Tommies;" he said, with a pleasant smile still on his face, although it was so gray and wasted; "there was Tommy, the cook's mate on board the *Saucy Lass*, and Tommy the cabin-boy, in the *Erysipelas*, and Tommy the cheating old nigger at Rio, and Tommy that had the dodge for catching flying fish, and Tommy——"

"No, sir, no; your own nephew Tommy.

Tommy Upmore, that used to be a little boy at the soap-works, when you came back from sea, and you tossed him through the ceiling, and his head stuck fast. But you are not to talk ; you must only think about it."

He obeyed me, like a child, looking at me now and then, as if to refresh his memory, while I held the tea-cup to his lips, and put some buttered toast into his mouth, between whiles. And the great jaws, that used to lift a kitchen-table, could scarcely crush the soft toast, without the tea to help them.

"Mother will come in, and sit with you now," I said, when he had eaten as much as he could manage ; "and at eleven o'clock, you will have a bowl of soup, and a glass of port wine ; and after that, you go to sleep. We are not going to bother you with any doctor, at least, until the afternoon. And then perhaps Dr. Flebotham, a very clever man, who almost saved my dear father's life, will look in, to have a little chat with you."

"No, Tommy, no," he answered, looking at me steadily, as if his breakfast had supported

him ; “ ’twould only be running up a bill for nothing, and your mother has paid a deal too much for me already. But she shall have it all back again, my boy, and a pretty penny on the top of it, if you can keep a secret. I can call you to mind, pretty clearly now ; though not a bit like what you used to be, except for the swab on the top of your head. Can you keep a secret, Tommy boy ? ”

“ Sir,” I replied, with my eyes upon his, and my countenance full of decision ; “ it is the very thing that I have always been most famous for, of all the many things that I can do.”

In spite of this very strong assurance, he seemed to be doubtful, as if I had said too much.

“ How can you be famous for it,” he asked, perhaps with some reason, “ unless you are accustomed to brag about them ? But ’tis Hobson’s choice with me, Tommy, between you and your mother. And the youngest lad is safer than the very oldest woman. Get your dear mother to go upon an errand,—the longer the better,—when I am at my best, about noon of the day ; and then get me a pipe, to improve my

breath; and you shall know what there is, so far as I can fetch my wind to tell it. I remember all about you, my lad, now."

I put my fingers to my lips, to convince him what an enemy I was to excess of conversation; and I saw that he was pleased, and it helped to satisfy him, that there could be no mistake in trusting me. And the way in which I managed to get my mother off the premises, was enough to establish my repute in this way. For I told her what was true, that after all the many years Mrs. Windsor, and she, had been such hearty and warm friends, never falling out—except once for three years, upon the question whether when you sew a button on a shirt, the thread should be wound round the stitches that go through it, before fastening off, or whether (as my mother said) that does more harm than good—after all this staunch and uninterrupted love, it would seem a very heartless thing on her side, if she failed to set off, at the first hour allowed by good breeding for a call (which in Maiden Lane was always eleven o'clock, except upon a washing-day), and congratulate her

cordially, and find out everything about the engagement of Polly to Bill Chumps.

My dear mother was quite as eager to do this, as I to persuade her of the duty of it; supposing only that Uncle Bill could get on without her, for two hours and a half. Two hours and a half meant five, I knew; for two hours at least would be spent in cabs; inasmuch as my mother never got into a cab, without making the driver go all the way, according to her own directions. This being to him an increase of income, he was glad to navigate accordingly, and enjoyed a geographical lecture at the end of the journey, which was worth another shilling to him. For my dear mother felt a great truth, which has never been properly felt by our School-boards, so that the foundation of their scheme is rotten; viz., that people must be paid for learning; which is perhaps the saddest trial of the human life.

Uncle Bill should have been depressed, and frightened, by this first parting from his kindly watchful nurse; but he took quite a different view of the matter, and resolved to have all the

pipes that he could get, and a glass of hot grog, with the window open.

"Surely it is bad for you, sir," I said.

But he answered, "My son, what do you know about it? I am making my accounts up for a better world; and what good-will can I hope for, if I cast them up all dry?"

As soon as he had made himself quite comfortable, with an ounce of best bird's-eye, and three clean pipes, and the appearance of more rum not far off, he said, "Tommy, lock the door, and put the key beneath the baccy-box, and let me know if your dear mother happens to turn back, for women are very liable to do that sort of thing. Very well; now come and sit close by me. I can't spin a long yarn, for want of wind, nor yet a very plain one; but you must help it out.

"About three years ago, after knocking about in a lot of little craft, in the Indian seas, sometimes up, and sometimes down, according to the fortunes of seafaring men, I was skipper of a schooner in the sponge and coral trade, or the Beachymess, or anything that might turn up,

from a terrapin to a tarpaulin, as we say. We were trading with the natives, between whiles, every man on his own hook, with his own ventures, while we waited for the super-cargo's orders, according as he landed to get freight. And not being full, he took us to the—well, never mind, what islands, but a very savage part, where the people are idolaters, and cannibals. Here there was a settlement of white men, hailing from every land under the sun almost, where it doesn't turn them black, and make niggers of them. As lazy a lot as could be found pretty well, but they kept themselves with fire-arms against the natives, and collected goods for shipment, in a fort they had set up.

“We had orders from the factor, who was also part-owner of the craft, whose name was the *Saucy Lass*, to leave him at the fort, for a couple of days, while we made the opposite coast, about three leagues off; to traffic for ourselves, if we could, and to lay in provisions, and our stock of water. For the water at the fort, though very good while fresh, would not keep three days in cask, when out at sea. He

showed us where beautiful water could be got, and plenty of cassavas, yams, and such like, and fruit none of us knew the names of. But he warned us to be on our guard, and stand off at night, and keep the brass guns loaded, for the natives of that island were much worse than this; and these were bad enough, in all conscience. There was no reef between the two islands, but one enormous reef round both of them, with water as clear as plate glass inside, and a light air, and sands that shone like snow.

“ We found the pretty stream of good water, as he told us, and began to take in our supply with the boats, for we carried more hands than is usual aboard a schooner of three hundred tons, several having shipped without much wages, on the chance of doing something for themselves; and there was not a Lascar among them, but mostly British, and two or three Germans. So that we were not afraid of half a thousand savages, without treachery, or surprise, or some other dirty trick.

“ But the part where we landed showed no sign, at first, of having any living creatures upon

it bigger than wild pigs, and goats, and an animal something like a hare, that was very good eating; and the quantity of fruit upon the trees was such, that most of us found ourselves doubled up with colic. But I served out a good supply of cordials for that; and afterwards, the fine appearance of the place, and the softness of the air, and the colour of the ground (which was almost as good as a meadow to us) seemed to make us sleepy, and inclined to lie about.

“And it would not be true of me to tell you, Tommy, that I was the breadth of a rope’s end better than the hands put under me. I never was very strong for discipline, from knowing that I should not like to have it done to me, and being more used to come under it than over it, according to the want of luck and money. But we happened to have a very good Scotch mate, whose name was Rob McAlister.

“‘Captain,’ he says to me, when I was lying easy, on a bank of some stuff that was as soft as feathers, and wishing I had somebody to fill my pipe, and light it; ‘Captain, it mis-gi’es me much, but we be o’erfeckless.’

“ ‘You go to Jericho, Rob,’ I answered ; ‘or fill my pipe first ; and strike me a light, and then go to the top of that rock, and look out.’

“ Before I had finished my pipe, he came back, and told me that the woods were so thick inland, that they might hold a thousand people, without showing one. But he felt almost sure that he had heard a screech, not of a bird or wild beast, but a man ; and this made me pay some attention, because I knew that his hearing was wonderfully sharp ; for he had saved us once, by hearing breakers through a full gale of wind at night, when no other man could perceive the sound.

“ ‘Call the hands together, and draw down to the boats,’ was the order I gave ; ‘I shall be down there myself, by the time you have got them ready.’ But whether I fell off to sleep, or what, is more than I can tell ; only one thing is certain, the men were at the boats, before I was near them, and before I had begun to think at all about it. Then they sent a lad to fetch me, whose name was Tommy, understrapper to the cook ; but before he could find me, a terrible

scream made me sit up, and look round. Upon the slope behind me, were a lot of darkies running, and in front of them a white man, flying for his life, who had clearly caught sight of our boats, just when his case seemed altogether hopeless.

“Our men had seen him, and were pushing out a little ; while others waved their guns, and shouted to him, to put on his last bit of speed, and they would save him. From the place where they stood, they could see the great multitude of his pursuers, which I could not do ; and this made me wrong them, in thinking them cowards, for not coming up the hill, to help. Meanwhile he was coming down the hill, with his breath too short to be used, and his heart pumped out, and his naked legs covered with blood, and his face as white as birch-bark, and as resolute as iron. Three of his pursuers were in front of the rest, and not more than thirty yards behind him, and each bore a javelin, which he would not throw yet, for fear of missing aim in the rush of it. None of them had seen me, where I sat and watched them, through the bush that sheltered me.

“I saw that they must pass, within a few yards of my lair, so I crawled behind a tree which was feathered with some creepers, and there stood upright, with my double-barrelled shot-gun, which I luckily had brought for the chance of game. Then I gave a little whistle, and the flying man descried me, and turned in that direction. ‘Don’t stop,’ I whispered; and he saw what I meant, and continued down the hill, as if he had not seen me. Then as his three pursuers rushed past the tree, I let out with my fist at the left ear of the nearest one, and sent him sprawling; then I shot the two others as dead as a door-nail, before they could turn to lance me. Big limber fellows they were both; one of them fell forward on his head, and turned a somersault, down the steep ridge he was so hastily descending.

“‘On, for your life!’ I cried, ‘you are too blown to fight. Tell the mate to come with half a dozen men to meet me.’ He doubted for a moment about leaving me, but seeing me loading again in all haste, and the rest of his pursuers standing still in great amazement, on he went,

and I could hear him panting down the hill. Then as soon as I had loaded, I made after him with speed; seeing which, the other savages set up a fearful whoop, and came rushing down the hill, perhaps three hundred altogether. Two javelins hissed over my head; and then I turned, and dropping on my knee, sent two heavy loads of duck-shot, right into the faces of the foremost. This dropped three or four of them, and the rest stopped again, as if they had never seen a thing like this before; and the roar of the gun among the rocks was not a trifle. Without stopping to load again, on I hastened, and met Rob, and six sturdy fellows, eager for a shot.

“ ‘Not yet,’ I cried, ‘not until we are aboard; and then let us give them a general salute.’ ”

“ All saw the force of this, and as soon as we had lifted the poor runaway into my boat, we pushed off, when somebody exclaimed—‘Why, wherever is poor Tommy?’ It was this boy’s scream which had so luckily aroused me; and then in his terror he had tumbled on a rock, and lay there stunned, until the present moment. Tommy was a favourite with every one, and it

was impossible to leave him to be killed ; so the mate, and two others, volunteered to go and fetch him ; although it was no small danger, because the savages had rallied, and were coming on again. But we sat ready, with our guns presented, and misliking perhaps the look of them the villains hesitated. So our three men brought poor Tommy to the water's edge, and we gave them a good cheer, which they heartily deserved. We saw little Tommy hoisted on the back of Rob McAlister, for his legs had quite failed him ; and just as we were stretching out our arms, to ease him in, the savages let fly at us a volley of their javelins.

“ ‘Give it them !’ I cried, and every gun rang out with a fine blaze of fire, for the evening was set in. Away scampered every baccy-coloured skin that could ; for at least half a score of them could move no more. But alas, they had done for our poor little Tommy ! A javelin had passed through his loin, and pinned him to the brave mate's shoulder, so that he was dead in about five minutes. Our men were so enraged, that they longed to land again, and

go after the savages; but I would not allow it, with night coming on, and two of our number wounded. So we made for the *Saucy Lass*, and got on board, tired with our day's work, and very sad about poor little Tommy. Now, my lad, I am not come to the chief part yet; but I can't tell any more, for coughing now. Find something for your mother to be off about, to-morrow; and perhaps if you behave yourself, you shall hear the rest of it."

CHAPTER XII.

A PAIR OF BLUE EYES.

My mother, who was very sharp about some things, could not have failed to discover from me, or else from Uncle Bill, who was as simple as a child, that he had spent a long time in telling me a portion of one of his manifold adventures; which recalled to my mind, once or twice, the rare doings of that grandest of all rovers, Captain Robinson Crusoe. But when she returned from a very long visit to Mrs. Windsor, she had such a quantity not only to tell, but to give her own opinion on, and to get it confirmed by mine (whenever she could stop), that it was next to impossible for her to look about, as she generally did, or even wait to be talked to, unless it was about the matter she was so wrapped up

in. And she declared that she had not heard a quarter of it yet; being forced by her duties here, to come away abruptly—though she could not have had less than five hours there, however well she steered the cabman—and if she could only be sure, that her dear invalid would not miss her so very much, she had promised to go again, and give her very humble advice about many things, to-morrow. It was very painful for her—she confessed that freely—when she remembered what might have been; and £12,125 might better have stopped in the boiling connection, than gone into the meat trade, to buy up opposition. However, her dear boy would not break his heart; had he cared to come forward, he might have put a spoke in somebody's wheel; and there always had been something about Polly, which she would be the last to remind her mother of.

When the coast was quite clear, as Captain William expressed it, after looking down the "drive," as we called it (which was very nearly twelve yards long, whenever the gate was opened outwards), and receiving a wave from a new

white handkerchief—for my dear mother had taken three that day, having wept into her capstrings yesterday—he made his preparations, or directed me to make them, for a very long voyage in the narrative trade. He had three pipes ready, not to smoke them hot, for fear of any tendency towards coughing, and a glass of “regulation,” to be served when he made signal, and his little spy-glass handy, that he might see the bus from Hampstead, at a turn of the road a long way up the hill; and he always expected to see sailors on it, and if he saw one, he would be sure to drink his health.

“Tommy,” he said in a determined tone; “I mean to have a quid, and no mistake. It is six months now, since I have had a quid. In the pocket of that coat behind the door——”

“But, sir,” I answered, looking at him with surprise; “you have been most strictly forbidden to do it. You spoke of it yesterday, and Dr. Flebotham said that congestion at least might ensue. Try to wait till mother comes, and if she allows it——”

“Don’t be crafty, Tommy, now. I hate crafty

people. Your mother would never allow it, you know well; and my only chance for it is, when she is gone away. Do as I tell you. I am the skipper here. Mutiny, indeed, from a younker just shipped! You won't hear another word, until you bring my knife from the pocket with the yellow button to it, and a cake of Cavendish from the little midship locker. Very good; now cut where I scar my nail. It's not so much the comfort of it that I want, as to keep the throat juicy, and prevent me coughing, from hauling so many dry words out of my hold. Very well done, Tommy; I shall promote you. Now, where did I break my yarn off?"

"About your all getting safe into the ship, sir, with two men wounded, and poor little Tommy dead. And you said, you hadn't come to the best part yet. Though I thought it was very good indeed already."

"Well, my son, you shall hear the rest of it, and judge. As soon as we had brought ourselves round with victuals, for the sake of the hard day we had been through, I sent for the man we had rescued, and held a long talk with him in my

cabin. As yet, I have only been able to meet with two men who had the gift of gratitude, and both of those happened to be Welshmen. The name of this man was Rees Edwards; and a smarter hand never went aloft. Welshmen, as a rule, are not first-rate seamen; but when they are good, they beat everything; and Rees Edwards was the best of them I ever came across. His last trip had been in an American bark called the *Beaver*, engaged in the Beachy-mess, and sponge-trade, among these Pacific islands. She had struck in the night, on the great coral-reef surrounding these two islands, and a smart breeze from seaward setting in, they had found it impossible to haul her off. A heavy sea got up, and she broached to, with the rocks grinding through her timbers. But the crew contrived to launch their boats, and finding a passage through the reef, made land, and were very soon surrounded by the natives.

“These fellows shammed to be as good as gold at first, (though of course they knew nothing of their lingo) and supplied them with food, and gave them huts to live in, and laid themselves

out to be obliging. So that the castaways, eighteen in number, began to go about the place, as if they were at home, and prepared, with the rough tools they could make, to build a craft big enough to carry them away. But suddenly two of their number were missing, and then two more, and then another couple; and the natives endeavoured to persuade them by signs, that these had only wandered away into the woods, and would soon find their way home again. The surviving dozen did their best to hope so, but took more care to keep together, and not to go abroad at all at night.

“But very soon, they found out the horrible meaning of it. For suddenly the savages, having lost all patience, with their appetites whetted by the relish of white flesh, fell upon them in the night, and killed them all but three, leaving nothing but their bones by the morrow night. Those three they kept alive, because they were too thin; until they fattened up two, and devoured them. The third, and last, was our friend Rees Edwards, who fell into a melancholy frame of mind, and refused to grow eatable, upon

any kind of ration. So they put him in the temple, where they kept their chief idol, believing that this would improve his texture, and consecrating him to be sacrificed, whether he were fat, or whether he were lean, upon the appearance of the following moon.

“Edwards, however, was a very clever fellow, and pretending to be altogether resigned to his fate, obtained some privileges, as a holy man now, and devoted to the glory of their great idol, *Jumbilug*. He kept a sharp watch upon the moon as well; and took strengthening victuals, as he saw her getting thinner. He had learned a good deal of their lingo by this time, and found out from them about the white man’s fort, over against the further end of that island. And the very night before the new moon would appear, he slipped through a hole, which he had long been boring in the mud wall of the joss-house, and escaped into the woods, with a long start of his enemies. He made his way eastward by the stars, till sunrise, and eastward the whole of the following day, with his enemies upon his track, as you have heard already.

“ ‘Now, captain,’ he said, when his tale was finished ; ‘you have done me the best turn one man can do another ; and I wish I could make you some small return. *Jumbilug* is the finest woman I ever saw ; and it would not be so very hard to run away with her.’

“ ‘I told him, that this was not in my line at all, having always been shy of the sex ; except to make a joke, or pass a compliment. But he laughed, and said—

“ ‘No fear of her tongue, captain, although she has got a very handsome one ; and her teeth are all pearls, and her lips are coral, and her eyes are as blue as the sky, and much brighter, and her hair is spun gold ; you never saw such a beauty.’

“ ‘I don’t care a d—n for all that,’ I replied, a woman aboard is the devil himself.’

“ ‘But, when I found that all these beauties were real, and could have no deception about them, (because the fair woman was made of wood) I became very eager to possess these charms, if it might be done, without foolhardiness. Edwards assured me, that with a

little dash, and management, it might well be done; for *Jumbilug's* house was a good bit away from the town of these savages, and very near the sea. And if we desired to punish the barbarians—as every man John of us burned to do—for the murder of poor little Tommy, and the massacre, roasting, and devouring of seventeen helpless white men, nothing could be such a desperate blow to them, as to lose their idol. For generation, after generation, had spent their best treasures in adorning her.

“‘If she's worth a penny, she's worth £50,000; and they'd rather lose their biggest chief, and all their wives, and daughters. I'm no judge of jewels, captain, but her eyes are something to beat all female embellishment. They come after you, all over the place, and they shine by night, like a million fire-flies. The tradition of the people is, that they were brought by a bird with great wings, from a country far away; perhaps an old trading ship from Borneo. Anyhow, there they are; and the pearls of teeth, as big as my thumb pretty nearly, and the tongue some red jewel they

pick out of the rocks, and the hair spun gold almost down to her waist, and the whole of the breast covered up with fine pearls—ah, you should have seen her when the full moon shone, as it did upon the night when I was dedicated !’

“This description, my dear Tommy, produced a very fine effect upon my mind. I have heard your dear mother say, a hundred times, that nothing is so elevating to the male nature as admiration of a virtuous female. And where could I hope to find any female, half so virtuous as *Jumbilug* ? But I cautioned Rees Edwards, not to let our fellows know, what the value of this fair maiden was.

“‘You are right,’ he made answer, ‘we should lose half her pearls ; though the other things won’t come out easily at all. When the priest was asleep one night, I just ventured to feel the bright tip of her tongue ; but it was firm, anchored in good holding ground. We must have a scheme to bring her off entire, and not let them know that we do it for her value, but for the outrage and cruelty of them.

All that we can plan out afterwards; but first find out, whether they are up for it. Of course if they are not, we can't drive them to it.'

"I questioned our fellows about this matter, and found them not only quite ready, but eager, and I might say wild, to go forth upon this venture. And that, not only for the spree, as sailors call it; but with the prospect combined, of revenge for the loss of little Tommy, and of punishing niggers for eating superior flesh, and of bringing back snug bits of plunder, on their own account. For I promised them everything they could lay hold of, and carry away, except *Jumbilug* herself—not for her value, as I told them plainly, but as a curiosity for a Museum; which might even give me £50 for her. They knew that I had never been a greedy man, and they promised to give me some of their own share, if it should be worth my acceptance.

"Being hard-set for time, we resolved to do it, on the very next night, having made up our minds to keep our allies at the fort outside it, because of the claims they might set up. There would be no moon, and those wretched man-

eaters would be all fast asleep, as Rees Edwards told us, within two hours after sunset. They might have set a watch upon the schooner; but they could not see boats at that distance from the shore, and they had no canoes on this side of the point. So we left the wounded men, to mind the craft, with the two brass carronades loaded; and slipped off, all in the yawl this time, ten of us, I think, besides the Welshman, with muffled oars, and all guns loaded.

“By water the distance was less than by land, and with Rees Edwards steering, we made the land, right under the joss-house in about three hours. It was very dark here; for the starlight was shut out, by trees overhanging the water; and leaving two hands to mind the yawl, and just keep her afloat, for all was calm as a duck-pool, nine of us landed with guns and axes, and without a word, made for the temple.

“We found the very hole, by which Edwards had escaped, only roughly stopped with brushwood, which we removed quietly; and then the Welshman entered, and went round the place,

knowing every corner of it, as soft as a mouse, and then came back, and whispered—

“‘Only the old priest here, and he’s snoring in the lobby. Captain, come in, and the rest wait signal.’ This had been settled between us; and first we gagged the old priest, and corded him, for he was not a bad fellow, compared with some, and had been pretty good to his captive. Then we rolled up *Jumbilug*, whose eyes were sparkling, in a piece of sail-cloth, which I had brought for the purpose, and we lashed it round her ankles, and above her golden hair. Then we ran to the front gate, and let in our fellows, and they struck a light, and looked about them.

“There was plenty of glitter, and a lot of little images, and Brummagem beads, and bits of glass, and such like, but very little gold—except *Jumbilug*’s own—for the island produced none, I dare say. However, there were pearls upon almost every image, and a lot of lovely shells, and shining spar, and coral. Every man took whatever caught his eye, while Edwards and myself lifted *Jumbilug*, who was

about five feet long, from her pedestal, and carried her—though she was a precious weight—to the boat, and laid her in the stern-sheets. Then we ran back, and fetched out our men, for fear of accidents; and all well-laden made off in high feather. And it was high time, I can tell you, Master Tommy, for we heard a tremendous row, before we turned the point, screeching, and wailing, and the shrieks of women. Perhaps they had seen our lights up in the village, which was not more than half a mile away, and the building had windows in the dome made of talc, or some such half-transparent stuff. We were heartily pleased with our job, and gave them three cheers for their liberality.

“In the morning, we made sail for the fort, all pledged to say nothing about our exploit, even to the factor; but every man stowing away his own loot, without any quarrelling about it, and, of course, giving proper share to those outside. But when Rees Edwards came into my cabin, and we unrolled *Jumbilug* privately, I can tell you that I stared, as I never stared

before at any female figure. She was ten times as gorgeous as he had described her; and the wealth of whole ages was in and upon her. I insisted that Edwards should take his fair share, though he laid no claim to anything. We stood her upright against the bulk-head, as handsome as paint, and as bright as a star; and then we looked at her, and she looked at us, as if begging us not to spoil her beauty.

“‘First choice to you, captain,’ said the Welshman; but I answered, ‘No, let us toss for it;’ and so we did, and I won, and made choice of her eyes. And then we went on, turn and turn, until there was nothing left but the wooden block; and even that was very clever, I can tell you, and would fetch £50 for a museum, I believe. He got the teeth, which I was very glad of,—a dozen large pearls half as big as my thumb; but I got the golden hair, and made a present of it, all except one lock, to Rob McAlister, who was prouder of it than of his sweetheart. Also I got—but there, what’s the use of talking of it? You have heard what careless scattergoods all honest sailors are.

There is nothing left of all of it, but only these here; and they'd have gone long ago, but for being in my caul."

Uncle William sighed a little, at the end of his long yarn, as if he should never spin such another; and then, from inside the blue woollen thing he wore on the hoops of his ribs, out he pulled a little packet, something (like a worn-out piece of bladder from a jam-pot) rolled, and tied with yellow silk.

"Open it yourself," he said, "but have a care of my caul, young Tommy, which has saved me fifteen times from drowning; though the Lord knows, I shall never want it any more. This old ship is chartered for a voyage to Kingdom come. Perhaps that Coast-fever has been and spoiled the colour of them. I haven't seen them, now, for a twelvemonth or more; though I feel 'em going into my ribs pretty often. One will be for you, and one for your mother; as soon as you have put me under ground."

"Uncle Bill," I said, "we don't mean to do anything of that kind. You shan't go aloft, as you call it, for forty years yet. Why, what

most wonderful things, I declare ! What lovely gold, and what amazing stones ! ”

He looked at me with a very pleasant smile ;
“ Something like your hair, the gold is spun up, Tommy, ain’t it ? Only yours have got more touch of nut-colour in it. Indian work, that is, I reckon ; stolen out of some wreck, with the stones, no doubt. No savage work there, and no English goldsmith, nor French either, could come near it. Mysore, or Tanjore, or Trichinopoly ; but I believe the stones must have come from Borneo. At least, so the only knowing man I ever showed them to, thought they must have done, though he couldn’t say how ; and *Jumbilug* had worn them for three hundred years, at a rough guess ; for ten men’s time, the savages told Edwards. He told me, he believed they must be blue diamonds ; but I never heard of such things ; I call them sapphires. And I wouldn’t tell you, what the island is—why, do you think ? Because such a Government as we’ve got now, would insist upon what they call ‘restitution.’ They’d send out one of them iron pig-troughs things they have turned the British navy into, to

re-build *Jumbilug*, and fit her up again, with her eyes at our expense ; and all the rest at the cost of the British taxpayers ; and then give her a Royal salute, and steam away, for fear of hurting the feelings of the natives."

"And perhaps," I replied—for this reminded me of Roly's views upon that subject—"they would put half a hundred of plump Englishmen ashore, as a meet and proper offering to the injured *Jumbilug*."

CHAPTER XIII.

STRONG INTENTIONS.

SUCH a weight came off the heart of good Uncle William, and such a relief was afforded to his ribs—where the parcel had made a great hole, as he showed me, like the postmaster's stamp on a bonnet-box—that as soon as he restored his caul to its proper and inborn aptitude of comfort, he was enabled to be just to another tidy quid, and another glass of grog, not so very fountain-heady.

“Don't let me see them any more,” he said, when he found himself ready for a bit to eat; “they have buttoned up the locker of my poor stomach, and I believe that's how I took the fever, to which I was never born natural. But not a word to your dear mother about them,

until I tip the signal. That old Jew wanted, oh, how he did try, to get these beauties out of me! He would have given me a thousand pounds apiece for them; and that proves them to be worth at least ten times as much. Get a fair opinion about them, my lad; and then lock them away, unless you want the money."

I could not help admiring the very clever way, in which Uncle William had encircled the blue stones with the spun wreath of pure gold, as fine as any hair, quite as if they were a pair of brooches in gold setting. And this fetched the colour up, or made them show by contrast, with a lustre, at once very clear and very dark; though both of the crystals were still in the rough. They were something like a pear in form; which explains little, for pears are as different in shape as men are. What I mean is a pear of the variety which the dealers call the "Duchess," which tapers less than the Jargonelle, but much more than the Bergamots. Between the two crystals there was very little difference, in size, or weight, or colour, each of

them turning an ounce in the scales. But much as I admired them, and could look at them for hours ; it did not seem likely that they could be worth what Uncle William talked about.

Upon this point I determined to consult Professor Megalow, who knew nearly as much about stones as bones ; till I saw in the *Times* that he was sent to Egypt, upon some important scientific errand ; and then it occurred to me to ask Sir Roland. Not that he was likely to know anything about it, but that he might commend me to a skilful and upright jeweller, such as a family of rank and wealth were likely to have dealings with.

And even while I was thinking of him, up he rode, in his usual haste, upon a showy-looking hack ; for the Twentifolds had given up their London establishment, at the death of the previous baronet. With very great pleasure, I ran down to meet him ; for although "Placid Bower" was not very grand, I knew that he would be well pleased with it, his nature being very kind, and frank, and hearty. Of

course he spoke first, for he always took the lead.

“Why, Tommy, what a beautiful place you have got! I envy you, my dear boy, that I do. And such a look out! You can see the Victoria tower, and read the clock over the bridge with a moderate glass; and on a clear day, you can see the Derby run. You rogue, you never told me of this snug shop, the very place for an industrious M.P. And that is what I’m come about; as well as the pleasure of seeing you, my dear friend, and your good mother.”

“Mother will be home in an hour or two,” I said; “and we’ll make your horse comfortable, and you too, I hope. She is gone to see Bill Chumps’ intended, and advise about all the great preparations. He is going to marry Miss Windsor, who has come into a tidy little lump of money—£12,125, entirely at her own disposal. But of course, they will have a settlement.”

“Holloa!” he answered; “well that beats me. I thought you were sweet in that quarter, Master Tommy. But you look very jolly, so I

hope it is all right. Take me into your own den first. I want to have a pipe, and a chat with you. Well, here we are! Just the sort of place I like. Books enough to look at, and remind you of past woes; with their backs shown like scattered enemies. But I don't half like this news of yours. I did not mean Chumps to get married, for ten years. It takes all the enterprise out of a man. On the other hand, the cash will be handy for him, and enable him to apply himself to politics, though not half enough to live upon. But I have very large ideas in my head. When do they mean to be made miserable for life?"

"Somewhere this side of Michaelmas, my mother seems to say. They have long been engaged, though old Chumps would not have it, until her Godfather discharged responsibilities. You are quite wrong, Roly, in supposing that I have any call, for a moment, to wear the willow. It is true that Miss Windsor, and your most obedient, have been very intimate from tender years, and ever must cherish sweet memories of playing together in the soap-suds.

But she does not approach—she in no way realizes—she never has been to me more than a bubble.”

“Tommy, your metaphor is fine ; and (which is a much greater rarity) appropriate. Now, let us consider how all this bears on the one ambition of my life, and of every life at all worth living—the kicking of the Rads off the foul perch they are crowing on. They have made it foul, mind. It was clean enough, when they hopped up, by cackling, and flapping their wings, and nudging sideways, as if they meant rather to go down, than up. All the honest cocks on the top bar took it easy, and put their heads under their wings, and tucked up one leg, and spread out the claws of the other ; till down they went headlong, tumbling on their combs, at the rush of a cock, who had sworn he would not fight. And fight he won't now, to preserve his hen's eggs ; but only to keep his own perch to himself, and the few little bantams he allows to come up. Meanwhile, rats and weasels increase and flourish ; not a sound egg of trade is there left in the nest ; and of all the fat

chicks of the colonies, not one is allowed to jump up on the mother's broad back, and practice a little crow, under her protection. In fact, my dear Tommy, the big cock of all, having crowed himself up to the top of the roost, has forbidden every other cock to chuckle in his throat, unless it is in chorus with him. Meanwhile, his own run is on every side invaded, and his chicks carried off, and his corn-bin robbed; but all he cares for is to keep his own perch, and be clucked to, as if he were the only cock on earth."

"I dare say that is all true enough," I answered; "but I don't see how we are to better it. What can two little cockerels, such as you and I, do?"

"Tommy, it is that accursed spirit, or want of spirit, that keeps the pest triumphant. I am a very little cockerel; as you say, and should bite the dust before the old rooster. Reason and right go down before him, and all the old principles of patriotism are a mixen for him to crow on. But why? There have been infinitely finer cocks, who would have rolled in the dirt, if they had

tried to cut such capers. The reason is simply craven terror, and the want of firm union against him. Truth, and common sense, and common interests, must prevail in the end; if only they are backed up against crowing humbug. And it is the first duty of every one, who cares for his country, to bear his little share in this. Eloquence, eloquence, is all the cry, —unrivalled eloquence, vast experience, unparalleled powers of mind, and so forth. But all of these cannot turn black into white, nor prove that we are clean, when they have dragged us through the mud. We are bad enough now, with our Country despised, our manufactures ruined, our agriculture bankrupt, our land worth nothing, our army made an infant-school, and our kingdom rent in twain; but madness, ten times worse than that, is threatened, and promised, for the very next Session."

"Well, let us hear the worst of it;" I answered very calmly, being used to these rodomontades of Sir Roland's, and not having found myself much the worse yet. "What does the enemy mean to do, next year?"

“You may smile, Tommy. I am afraid you are as bad as the rest; who won’t try to stop the blow, until their backs are broken. What do you think of these three little measures, out of seven, which the Cabinet propose to employ the Recess in preparing, and maturing, as they call it? To give the county franchise to every man who has a dust-bin, or even a dust-pan if he lives a hundred miles from London. To prohibit landowners from having any children, after a date to be settled by the Act. To abandon Malta, Gibraltar, and Aden, and all other places held unjustly, and surrender the British fleet, and all ships of war now building, to France, and Russia, and the Irish Land-league. A pretty fair programme I call that.”

“And so should I, Roly, if I believed a word of it. But don’t carry on with any more such chaff. Have a glass of good ale, good English malt, a sound constitutional draught, as you call it. I ordered in a firkin, and it has just got bright.”

“Now, if Englishmen drank this,” exclaimed Sir Roland, after a good pull at the fresh, and

freshening beverage, in my silver pot, one of the many I had earned as coxswain of victorious crews, "if Britons, instead of whining about their digestions, and sipping the flat sourness of half-ripened grapes, took a good swig of such hearty stuff as that, very soon we should be Britons again. The need of the age is good ale, my Tommy; not the public-house stuff, but the genuine thing, such as every good brewery can turn out when it likes. The decay of the nation, and the triumph of the hypocrites date from the difficulty of getting decent beer. And think of the brotherhood created by good beer. I take a pull, Tommy, so do you; we look at one another, and we trust one another, and a mutual warmth goes down into our glad bosoms. Will you get such a feeling from your sulky glass of claret, or your poisonous artificial waters, or even the fizz-up-the-nose of your touch-and-go Champagne? No, my boy. One of my most cherished hopes is to supply the noble working-man, with a real good article in the way of ale; and then let him be a Rad, or let him be a Tory—at any rate he will be an Englishman again.

Let us have another pull, to illustrate that sentiment."

I could not help laughing at Sir Roland's warmth, and confidence. Whatever he said, he had a way of saying, (without gesticulation, or appearance of excitement) which made at once a short cut into the mind of any listener. Perhaps because it came so straight, and clear, and sure, from his own mind; and generally in simple words, which are the wings of eloquence.

"Now, tell me what you came for, Roly," I said, being tired of politics; "have you any news from home, or anything of interest to the beer-quaffing Briton? I don't care twopence about the Government. They can't do any harm, for six months now."

"Can't they, indeed? Why, that is the very season, when they disgrace us most of all, without even having to cut the double shuffle, in answer to any honest question. However, as you don't want any more of that—though you must be roused up before February—I'll do what I can for you, in smaller matters. Understand, then, that poor Counterpaigne—who ought to

have made a better fight of it; I don't think an old man could have punished me like that, though I should be devilish sorry to give him such occasion—he has got no bones broken, any more than you had, when the rock gave you such a thumping. But it would have been better for him, if he had; as regards his popularity at our place. My mother won't go near him; which she must have done, if his damage had been more dangerous. You know, my darling mother is a little bit sentimental, and by no means worldly-minded; but the most stubborn of the stubborn, in her quiet, and very gentle way. She won't argue a point; she will let one talk for ever, without a word of contradiction; and there her conviction remains, as unmoved as the table one has been talking over. I knew by her face, that Sunday evening, that it was all up with Counterpaigne's chance of Laura."

"Thank God!" I cried, for the news was well worth it; and then at his look of astonishment I said, "Your dear sister, in my opinion, is the most perfect of all created beings; and I would

rather have my eyes put out, than see her made miserable, by a heartless, selfish, weak-minded, cold-natured, priggish, and altogether unprincipled fellow, who could never have the smallest idea of her value."

"You seem to be uncommonly warm about it, Tommy. What has poor Counterpagne ever done to you? He has his faults, I know; and he is not a sound Conservative. But he has scarcely enough character, to be so bad as you suppose him."

"He has a great deal more character, or want of it, than you think. And now that I can do him no harm with you, I will tell you a thing which I have kept to myself; though I had a hard job to conceal it from you, when I saw him continually at your sister's side. Some days before that Nathan and David business, and the very fine thrashing he received, I got a letter from an old friend of mine at *Corpus*, which was sent on to me from this place. And the writer, (without knowing more of Lord Counterpagne, than that Chumps knew him, and I knew Chumps) said that he had met him at his Club

in London, where he was by no means popular. And then, at the very time when he was preparing to visit you, and carry on his courtship, he was living with an actress of very low repute, and had promised (as she said) to marry her. With that I have nothing to do; and I know that it is not supposed now to be any harm at all. But I thought it a low thing, for him to come, fresh from such company, and hold your sister's hand."

"You are quite right, Tommy; it was a low thing; and no gentleman, who thought twice, would have done it. And over and above all that, you know that I have a great contempt for Counterpaigne."

"I know that you have. How can you help it? And yet for some trumpery bits of ground, or some dirty seat in Parliament, you have been eager to sacrifice the purest, and warmest, and sweetest heart in all the world, to such a wretch!"

"Tommy, you speak hotly, and a little beyond your business. What makes you take up this question so intensely?"

Sir Roland looked at me, in such a way, that I resolved to have it out with him, and sail, or sink, at least under true colours.

“The simple fact,” I said, looking full into his eyes, for no man should frighten me, in a manly business, “that I love your sister, as purely, and entirely, as even she can deserve to be loved. There is not the least necessity, for you to tell me, that I am a presumptuous fool, or ass, or anything else that you like to call me, for daring to do such a thing. But I have dared it; and shall dare it, all my life. And though I have very little hope of success; it has done me good, and has elevated me. Not in the social scale, I mean, or any of that stuff, but as a man—a man who has a right to give his heart, though he may get nothing but disdain, for it. I have wanted, for a long time, to tell you this; that we might understand each other. You have seen my reluctance to accept favours from you—to get put into the House, and so on. I could not do that, while I kept you in the dark, about a thing likely to change all your feelings. You cannot say now, that I have humbugged you.”

Sir Roland, though generally so quick of reply, as almost to snap the words out of one's mouth, took so much time to think, that I felt my heart beat, like the wing of a bird that is rising.

"Well, Tommy," he said, looking more perplexed than angry, and taking me by the hand; "you have spoken as a man; and I thank you for it. And you deserve, that I should speak with equal candour. I will not say anything to hurt your feelings, more than may be avoided. As regards money, and character, and education, and kindness of nature, and warmth of heart, you are all that a man need desire for his sister. But as regards birth—my dear fellow, excuse me, you know that I would not say anything to pain you, about such an accident, if I could help it—there comes the point, which is hard to get over. We Twentifolds do not pretend to be, of royal, or even of noble descent, in the direct line; though we have intermarried often enough with the best blood in England; but this we can say, that for five hundred years, we have always been of the foremost rank of commoners, and

baronets, ever since such things were. In the last hundred years, there has only been one taint——”

“Oh, let me hear all about that,” I exclaimed; “I am truly delighted, that there has been that. Was it in the tallow-line, my dear Roly?”

“No, sir, it was not. It was in oil and bees-wax,” he answered, with a frown which was very like a smile; “the subject is a sore one, and pursuit would make it sorer. You had better ask my mother, what the story is. She tells it, with simplicity and sympathy. But to come back to tallow—as you coarsely put it. Let everything between us be exactly as it was. After what you have done for Laura—who would not be alive, to marry any one, but for you—I shall not attempt to interfere between you. Like the present Government, I shall ‘maintain an attitude of masterly inactivity;’ which may, or may not, have the usual result—to wit, servile passivity. Not a word about this subject again between us; until I renew it. Also bear in mind one thing,—even if you succeed with my mother,

and with Laura, you will not have my consent (without which nothing whatever can come of it) until you have done something great, and glorious, to win the fame, which leaps over all distinctions."

CHAPTER XIV.

FAMES FAMÆ.

WHAT is a fame, that overleaps distinctions ? And how may a poor fellow get hold of it ? I knew a man once, who could crackle all his knuckles, like a pair of four-chambered revolvers, and then fire off his wrists, and elbows, like double-barrelled rifles, after them. We called him the "distinguished knuckle-duster ;" and he called himself, the "famous artilleryman." Would an exploit of that sort overleap the pride of birth ; and endow our humble candles with the winding-sheet of pedigree ?

It was not in my nature, to be put down, without having something to say for it. My mind was of ordinary substance, and perhaps rather heavy ; to balance the body, as well as to

keep the heart company, at times when the pair were in trouble together. But my body was not a mere somebody, neither an anybody, nor a common nobody; but a substance, in some wise remarkable, and surely as distinguished as that of the great knuckle-duster. He had won fame, to his own satisfaction; by deeds more surprising to the public ear, but far less so to the public eye, than those of which I was capable.

Now, which is more potent, the ear, or the eye? Which throws the quickest flash into the brain, and fills it with action the longest? Even before we have learned enough of speech, to be certain that all men are liars, how slowly creep in, at the sides of the head, the things that leap in, at the front of it! "Hot are the stings of the eye, but cold the pains of the ear," says an ancient; pithier for once than Horace.

This being so, what should prevent me, from attaining a hotter fame than even Mr. Pancast's? He could beat his drum upon the ear alone, and sound his own trumpet into waxy cells; but I could fly straight into the retina

of the brain, and block the whole traffic of the optic nerve.

“I will cultivate the lofty gifts of nature,” I exclaimed, when everybody else was gone to bed; “for the sake of my country, I am bound to do it. Sir Roland was right, and the great Professor wrong. Why did he say to me—‘Fly no more; aerial Tommy, fly no more’? Why, simply because he is a Rad, and foresees confusion to the Rad race, in my powers when developed. So far as my own convictions go, there is scarcely the seed of a fig, between a Rad, and a Tory, when they are let alone. But the difference is, that a Rad can be lashed up, like a half-broken horse, into any fit of kicking, and cares not a rap, what he smashes in his rage. But a Tory is far less impetuous; he has a much stronger perception of the rights of others, and especially of his country’s claims upon him. Such are the men, who are needed now. Pancrast has an extraordinary gift of lashing up quiet folk, to kick against their neighbours, and of running round the corner, when his own legs are in jeopardy. However, he is the

master of the yard for the present, in virtue of his powers of swearing, Roly says—but there must be a great deal more than that.”

The upshot of my very callous reflections, was that I determined, to begin, at once, to improve my long dormant aerial gifts. Or rather, I should say, my repressed, and snubbed, and even dreaded specialty, of rising from the ground. Although my frame was firmer, and more weighty than it used to be, and therefore less elastic, and expansive, than in boyhood, there was room enough to hope, that some of, if not all these losses might be retrieved, by care and skill, by regimen, strict diet, and the increased power of the muscles. And if these proved insufficient, there could be no doubt of one thing—a very little artificial aid would liberate me, from the growing tyranny of gravitation.

With all this in my mind, I went to bed, and dreamed a dream ; which, contrary to the usual laws of such visitants, became of the very greatest service to me.

My conscience had reproached me, while I said my prayers, for a very unworthy, and

unjust reflection, upon Professor Megalow, as above set down. From him, I had received the very greatest kindness; and to imagine, that any party motives could have led him to dissuade me from invading the upper firmament, was very mean and nasty of me, as well as most absurd. He was not at all a partisan, or active politician, but quietly held his opinions, upon reasons which satisfied him, and therefore cannot have been weak ones. And my last thoughts, or nearly so, having been about him, he appeared to me naturally in my sleep.

I dreamed, that I stood between Professor Megalow and my old enemy, Professor Brachipod, in the schoolroom of the *Partheneion*. Dr. Rumbelow also was in the distance; with his college-cap on, and the biggest of all his canes under his arm. The two learned professors were discussing my case, with very great interest, and some warmth.

“He will never fly again,” said Professor Megalow; “he is too solid now, and his bones are all set.”

“The very reason for his flying all the more,”

quoth Brachipod, contradictory even in a dream. "He can not only mount, but propel himself now. See, I manipulate him, and off he goes, ten times as high as he ever went before!"

Then he did something to me, and up I went; while he shouted, "That proves my theory. Can anything be finer? Chocoulous, Mullicles, and Jargoon, come and confess, what a set of fools you are. Bravo, Tommy, use your arms and legs!"

With such powerful action did I do this, while rushing up swift as a rocket, that I knocked half the roof of the *Partheneion* off, yet stuck fast somehow, and could scarcely breathe.

And no wonder; for round my neck, when I awoke, was the linen sheet, tight as a bowstring; while my poor arms and legs, instead of oaring ambient air, were all twisted up in the counterpane, and blanket, like an "apple-pie bed," combined with what we used to call "cat's cradle." But the worst of all was, that I could not remember, (though I sat up in the bed, and thought, as soon as I was free) what in the world it was, that had been done to me, by Professor Brachipod, to send me up over people's heads at such a pace!

Neither, in the morning, could I call to mind an atom of the thing, that I wanted so much to recollect ; though I knew, that it was something very simple, and most easy, and such as I could manage at almost any moment—just the very thing, in fact, which alone was needed, to restore my early powers, and perhaps to place them, in some measure, under my own command. After cudgelling my slow brain to no purpose, I resolved to take the bull by the horns, and do no less, than go, and see Professor Brachipod himself.

On the brink of an enterprise so perilous, duty alike to my friends, and self, demanded all possible precaution. The first thing I did was to tell Uncle Bill—for I feared to let my mother know—whither he should send for my remains, if I did not come home by dinner-time. Also I took a most trusty friend, to walk up and down, on the opposite side of the street, and listen keenly for any squeal, at all like vivisection. Also, I had a great mind to buy an American revolver, but felt ashamed of such a relapse into savagedom, and was satisfied with a bit of

English oak ; such as my quickness of turn might avail with, against a robustness above my own. So with *Grip* at my heels, I rang the bell.

The Professor was at home, and in answer to my card, sent a nice young lady, of Brachipod race, to say that he was just in the crisis of a very important experiment, but would come to me in a few minutes, if I could kindly wait so long.

"I am afraid we must hardly let that fine dog in ;" she said, with a pleasant smile, which made me feel ashamed. "I am very fond of them ; but dear papa is a little nervous now ; he has not been well lately."

"I hope you will pardon me for bringing him," I answered, "but he is very old, and a walk is such a treat to him. May I put him in some outhouse ? He is as quiet as a lamb. Oh, thank you ; that will do beautifully. I hope, I am not interrupting the Professor ; his time, of course, is so valuable."

Presently he came down ; and I was thoroughly ashamed of my own alarm. Instead of the

Brachipod, who used to jump, and gesticulate, and poke knuckles into me, I beheld an infirm, and disabled old man, who was killing himself prematurely, by wanting to know too much, about it. His face was melancholy, and almost pitiful, as if from perpetual disappointment; his forehead was channeled with a chart of hopeless soundings; and even the vivacity of his eyes was sad.

“I am very glad to see you,” he said kindly, and gazing with a little sigh at me. “I remember you well. But how much you are grown! I fear we used to frighten you, in the days gone by. We took the wrong course altogether. If we had only been gentle, and patient, we might have done much with your singular case, and learned things of very deep interest. It was bad luck. There were too many of us, and the spirit of rivalry spoiled everything. I should have kept you to myself, as I had every right to do. But poor Jargoon, and unhappy Chocoulous—you have heard what a sad loss all Science has sustained? Have you not? They have both fallen victims to the spirit of research. I

ought not to grieve for them; for there can be no nobler termination to a scientific life. Jargoon, as you know, had a doltish theory—though I should not call it that, when he cannot contradict me—about the universal action on all organisms, of what he called gaseous expansion. He made a great discovery, as he believed, of a primary element, ‘Proto-hylic Nephelin,’—intensely inflammable in combination. He was trying its effects upon the human system, by inhalation through a straw; when unhappily Mrs. Jargoon struck a match, to seal an important letter. In a moment, the Professor, and his theories were abolished; so exhaustively, that they could hold the inquest, upon nothing but the calcination of his left glass-eye.”

“I never heard anything more shocking,” I exclaimed, forgetting all the evil, in the sadness of his end, and admiring the courage of the great discoverer. “And poor Professor Chocolous—was he abolished too?”

“Not so entirely; but perhaps more sadly. You know that by his theory—a perfectly

absurd one—all causation was referred to the agency of bacilli—*bacteria* we used to call them, but the other word is the more correct. Moreover, he was indulging in a life-long hope, to establish, in his own person, the one thing which alone convinces the multitude,—ocular proof (as the outsiders term it) that the human race has lost its noblest, and far more essential member than the head is—in a word, its tail, by assuming an attitude never contemplated, in the scientific stages of evolution. A learned American has, in my opinion, cut the ground from under the feet of Chocolous, by showing that the caudal loss results from the abandonment of the quadrumanous life; and that the only chance of recovery lies in the resignation, not of chair, but house, and the re-institution of arboreal habitude. But, to pretermitt his theories, (which appear to me weak and outrageous) his end, before even the nucleolus of a tail was established, is a most melancholy tale. The very day after he had inoculated his dextral ulna with a new bacillus (discovered in the windpipe of a duck) he received,—as the

rule is with learned Germans, and the exception with learned Englishmen,—a most flattering invitation—which is in fact a command—to present himself in very high quarters. You may suppose, what a fuss he was in—for few of those foreigners have much self-respect—to put himself into his very best clothes, and to have all his theories ready in his hat. I suppose, that he would not be allowed to carry that, but I have never had the opportunity of learning.”

“Surely, sir,” I said, “with all your fame, and all the immense things, that you have discovered——”

“No, Tommy, no!” he replied, with much meekness; “but my scientific status is none the worse for that. However, Herr Chocoulous, the distinguished German, was happy to be thought worth looking at; and he prepared himself well, in every point but one. He should have provided himself with cross-trees, or guttapercha buffers, ever so small, just to take his bearing. ‘What will you do, if you have to sit down?’ I asked him, with some prescience of the woe in

store for him. ‘Bosh!’ was his answer, for he loved that word, ‘zey vill never ask a poor man, like me, to seet!’ ‘Well, I dare say not,’ I replied, having never found any occasion to understand such things; and off he went, standing up in a Hansom, and looking more like Punch, than a man of any science.

“About a fortnight afterwards, I was sent for, not to Court; oh no, no fear of that for an Englishman!—but to the death-bed of our poor Chocoulous; for whom I had always entertained sincere affection, and profound respect. I found him as lively as ever, and jumping, to show me how his theories had been established. There was no Mrs. Chocoulous, as perhaps you know; and nobody to care for him, except the maid-of-all-work. But she was crying dreadfully; and he was proving to her some new and unsustainable theory of bacilli.

“‘I vill be dead,’ he cried, ‘zis time to-morrow. For vy? For because my teory is ze true one. Both of zem, both of zem, proved in one second! Prachibot, if you leeve, tree tousand year, never you vill have sush triomp!’

“Of course I could not contradict him then ; but as soon as I came to hear all about it, the only thing proved was the soundness of my advice. For it seems, that as soon as he had been introduced, and received most graciously ; another great German appeared, of even superior eminence in another line. And our poor friend Choculous was kindly asked to sit. He pretended not to hear, and made a very fine retreat, with a deep bow, and one heel going back behind the other. But not even so, could he back out. Very nicely, but firmly, was he told, (in total ignorance of all his magnificent theories) to sit down ; which is not supposed to be the proper thing, in such a presence. The chairs were rather large, and had a very slippery covering, being at the same time hard, and bright. Nothing could be worse for a man to sit upon, who was cherishing hopes of inaugurating the recovery of our lost member.

“What could he do ? He could neither sit down, nor by any means refuse to do so ; the third course (as a great master of shuffling puts it) was to sit, and yet not to sit. And this the

poor Professor was obliged to do, in a posture of cardinal adversity. He brought his *scapulæ* to bear against the back of the chair, which was upright; then he super-posed, but not imposed, the sessile portion of his organisation; supporting his weight by his right wrist entirely, and maintaining non-contact in the critical quarters with the unscientific institution. This was most skilfully managed; as only a man deeply grounded in organisation could have organised it; and but for one little point, all had been well. This point was the simultaneity, of the great bacillar experiment, with the peril to caudal aspirations. Between two stools, or rather I should say, between the ulnar and the lumbar difficulty, Science lost one of her very brightest stars. The ligatures, skilfully placed to confine the experiment to a safe area, gave way, beneath the whole burden of a well-fed frame. The issue need not be described, although most deeply interesting. Mortification ensued; and our friend, acknowledged to be foremost in a most important study, left nothing but his papers, which I am now pre-

paring, with the aid of Mullicles, for publication."

"What a sad case!" I could not help exclaiming; "really it seems, as if Science destroyed all her great admirers, as the female spider does; in addition to all the poor flies of the public. I do hope, Professor, that you will take care of yourself."

"There is no fear for me, because all my theories are sound," he replied, with a sweet smile of certainty; "but I have great misgivings about Mullicles. Histic fluxion, as he calls it, is his craze; and he pushes his experiments beyond the bounds of prudence. I am sure that it must be a great blow to you, to have heard, that of the four learned men, who desired to promote your interests in early life, two alone are left, for the study of your case. You are come to me, I doubt not, because you have discovered, with the aid of Professor Megalow (from whom I have heard of you, more than once, as a very promising acolyte) that my theory about you was the true one. I would only request you to be candid with me."

I was touched by his diffidence, and gladly told him everything; how the death of my dear father had entirely deprived me of all my early buoyancy through sudden exultation; and how, instead of that, my only tendency to rise was apparently created now by wrath, and sense of wrong. But even this, I told him, was a rare case now; especially as I had done my utmost to repress it. Then I added, that I wished, for reasons which I need not mention, to recover my peculiar gift, but keep it under my own control.

“I can promise you all but that last,” he replied; “and that you can only secure, by returning to your former system of artificial weights. See how exactly everything has verified my diagnosis! ‘Organic levigation’ was the term I used, as if by a happy insight; and no better explanation can be rendered now. My dear young friend, you must place yourself entirely under my directions. But unhappily, I cannot undertake the matter *gratis*; though my ardour for Science would induce me so to do, if my circumstances were as they ought to

be. You are well aware of the disgraceful fact, that in England there is no State-subvention for the highest of all purposes—scientific research. We spend all our substance, and our brains, without emolument, or honour; while those who make improvements in some trumpery handicraft, or poison the public by pure quackery, obtain position, and title, and large fortunes.”

“But not the fame!” I answered with my usual politeness; and he smiled, and his pale, worn eyes glistened, through his double glasses.

Then I asked what his terms would be; and found them so moderate, that I doubled them; as was only fair to his high repute. But he made me pledge my honour to one thing—that during his lifetime I would not divulge his method, if it proved successful. I am happy to say that he still is living, and of very great renown, and good position; so that my promise remains still in force.

CHAPTER XV.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY.

EVERYTHING seemed to go well with me now, except for one sad visitation—the loss of my dear Uncle William. He, by his brave resignation, and patience, childlike simplicity, and wonderful yarns, as well as pipes, and grog, and quids—whenever he could get them—had endeared himself greatly, in a few days, not only to me, but to all at the Bower. Even *Grip* went to see him, and took such a fancy to him, that he would sit with his chin in the wasted brown hand, and look at him sorrowfully by the hour; as if they were two poor old broken chaps together. And the night Uncle Bill died, *Grip* never stopped howling; and he went about the place, and scarcely ate a bit of victuals, until he had attended the funeral.

But Uncle Bill's death, though very sad to us, was painless, and placid, and happy to himself. He had said, that he should like to see the chaplain; and accordingly Mr. Cope came in. We left them to themselves, and there was not much said; only they had a little prayer together; and Mr. Cope asked him if he had any doubts, and he said "None whatever." In the morning, he was passed beyond all doubts; and I, who sat up with him, cannot say exactly the hour, when his Angel came for him.

He always felt faith in the Lord, all his life; and though he may not have lived up to it, surely his last end was better than that of a man who endeavours to outstrip the Devil, by growing a tail to frighten him.

One thing surprised me about Uncle Bill, as soon as I had spirit to think of it; and that was—why had he never said a word about *Jumbilug's* eyes, to my mother, or myself, when he knew that his last time for business was come? I had even gone so far as to ask him, (when Dr. Flebotham pronounced his own

task accomplished) whether he would like me to bring them in, and show them; or whether there was anything he wished to say about them. But he put his pipe-stem to his lips—for he was allowed to do anything now, that would make his last hours tranquil—and he tried to shake his head, as if to say—“all that is settled.” And the only provision he made for death, (as regards this world, and its dealings) was to have his favourite pipe buried with him, and a quarter of a pound of bird’s-eye, and a box of the “Bottom of the Atlantic Matches,” which nothing can prevent from striking. For he had been among savage tribes so much, that all this became orthodox on his part.

Whether he was lawyer enough to know—for sailors do pick up queer things—that he saved the family £4,500, by this behaviour; or whether it was only that he would not now disturb himself, and did not wish to be reminded of the only stars, that living people care for; or whether he would not confuse his last pipe; at any rate, in the most decisive manner, he conveyed

to me, that he would have no more said about *Jumbilug's* eyes—which he would have condemned, at any less momentous moment—but all was to be, as he had once for all directed. This made me feel a certain sense of trusteeship; as if I were placed in full charge of these stones, and must most exactly do, whatever he had ordered.

But when I was told, for the first time, of their value, I found it very hard to trust my ears. Such a great injustice did it seem to me, (who have an ardent love of fairness) that the cleverest man in the world might work, for sixty years—the entire parenthesis of anybody's meaning here—without earning half of the value of one of the eyes of a barbarous idol.

For the great jewel-merchant in Hatton Garden, to whom Sir Roland took me, could scarcely believe his own eyes at first—the day being of London texture—until he put on a strong jet of light (reflected by white mirrors) and took a double magnifier, and went into the very bottom of both stones. Even then, he was almost afraid of his own judgment, and looked

at us doubtfully, and shook his head, and even the hand that held such treasures.

“If I did not know you to be Sir Roland Twentifold, and this young gentleman to be a friend of yours, and therefore above all suspicion, it would be my duty to call in the police, and place these in their charge,” he said; “as the produce of some tremendous robbery. I have been in the trade, for more than forty years, and Crown jewels, and those of the great R—— family have passed through my hands; but until now, never such a pair of blue diamonds as these are. They must be well known; they must have a great history. I know all the leading gems of Europe; but these are entirely new to me. Is there any reason, why I should not know the story?”

“None whatever,” I replied, “if you will receive it first in confidence. And then if you think that my right to them is perfect, I care not how the story spreads.”

I told him all I knew; while he listened with deep interest, and so did Sir Roland, who had not heard all till then. I insisted especially

upon Uncle William's character, and his great superiority to piracy, or rapine; and enforced the fact that he had not run away with that idol, with any view to its value, but simply as a deed of justice, against a most horrible tribe of cannibals, who had eaten as much as seventeen white men, and had vowed the sole survivor as a sacrifice, to the image with these resplendent eyes. The jeweller's sympathies went warmly with me, and with Uncle Bill in his operations; but he could not help sighing, and I asked him why.

"Because I never had such a chance myself;" he answered, with a candid smile. "And to think of your luck, in escaping all duty! Your Uncle? Why, let me see—three per cent. They could not have been valued for probate, or administration, at less than £150,000; and probably I should have had to appraise them. Since the disappearance of the French blue diamond, there is nothing in that line to come near them. Each of them is worth at least two Hope's; that is, if they cut, as I am sure they will."

"But is there not some ground to fear," I asked, "that when all the facts become known, our Government might insist upon restoring them? They seem to exist for the purpose of surrendering every British right, whether public, or private."

"Undoubtedly they do," he answered sadly; "but your very clever Uncle has provided against that. You can make oath, with clear conscience, that you do not know the name of the place they came from; and if they were there three hundred years, how can they be traced from Borneo? No, you need not have the smallest apprehension about that. They belong to you as absolutely, as the watch now in your pocket. And I congratulate you warmly, upon such a grand possession."

Then I asked him, with some diffidence, what the fee for his opinion was. But he said, "None. Only when you have them cut, I should like it to be done through our house, if you think fit. We are proud to say now that such work can be done in London, as well, or even better than in Amsterdam. It is a new

industry, and deserves to be encouraged. And to make a good job of such gems as those, would give a fine impetus to the English art."

This I promised gladly; and after some kind words of caution from him, and of good advice from Roly—who never left anything unhandled—we took a cab direct to "Placid Bower," feeling as important, I do believe, as any two young men in all London.

In the presence of Sir Roland, who dined with us that day, I handed to my mother that one of the two stones, which the jeweller had pointed out, as rather the more precious. But she was so amazed, when we had told her all the story, that it was quite impossible to refrain from laughing.

"You expect me to believe a single word of that!" she cried, having scant faith in youthful verity. "No, no, Master Tommy, I was born before you were. And what would your dear father have said, to hear such things! Your poor Uncle William was a man of such a nature, that if he had twelve pockets, there were twenty-four holes in them. He would have told me, of

course, not you ; if he had thought them worth speaking of. He had daily opportunity of testing my discretion. Put them under your pillow, Tommy, and don't let me hear any more of them." And she marched away, leaving her blue diamond contemptuously, in the finger-glass.

"Take her at her word, you millionaire of a Tommy ;" Sir Roland said to me, when he had shut the door.

And at first I was so touchy, that I felt inclined to do so. But better sense prevailed ; and on the following day, I left both the jewels at our banker's, (one in my mother's name, and the other in my own) locked up in a box, with other valuables. And this was a great weight off my mind ; and I said to myself, as I came away, "My blue eye shall never see the light again ; unless it is to please a pair of lustrous brown ones, a million times more beautiful than any jewel ever seen. But, alas, I shall never have such luck as that !"

Before I had time to fetch many sighs about it, or even to be certain that I need sigh at all,

(for Hope has a liking for my heart, because she finds herself so well treated there) behold, there came to pass a thing, that drove me to the very place, whither I was longing for to go.

“This very day,” Sir Roland cried, as he jumped off his horse, and left *Grip* to mind him, “this very day, Mrs. Upmore, if you please, you must send your dear son down to Lark-mount-on-the-hill. The powers of evil are conspiring against him; and nothing but his lovely face, and hair, and the way he lets the sunshine come under his heels, will scatter the devices of the democrats. Now, you hate all democracy; you know you do.”

“As far as I understand the nature of it, Sir Roland,” said my mother, who was proud of accuracy, “I am not much for it, as a question of degree. They sweep away all degrees, or try to do so. And how can Tommy ever be an M.A. then?”

“You are right—too right I am sorry to say;” Sir Roland replied quite gravely, for he always agreed most warmly with ladies, and by so doing generally converted them; “better had he not

attempt to 'be an M.A., with the present Government in power. He will be exposed to the most fearful risk. If the measures now proposed are passed next year, there are very solid grounds for believing that a bonfire will be made of M.A.'s upon Hampstead Heath, to celebrate the Democratic triumph. You saw the Martyrs' Memorial at Oxford, when you went to see what Tommy was up to once ? ”

“ Oh yes, Sir Roland, all cut into small ribs, not as if they had caught fire at all, but as clean as the three Holy Children. But what I thought most of, was the College halls, and kitchens, and the places with a sliding shutter, where the butter is buttery, and no best Dorset.”

“ Not in vain is it that ladies have such powers of observation. But how would you like to see all that swept away, and instead of it, Board-schools, dissenting chapels, co-operative stores, and social science institutes ? And unless you send Tommy down with me to Larkmount, that is all we shall have to look forward to. He alone can save the Country, from the vast deluge of anarchy now pouring in.”

“Well, I do feel it hard upon me,” dear mother answered, “to be losing him again; almost before he has had time to get into gray mourning for his uncle. But his dear father’s foremost principle was,—and he was putting by money, to support it—that Tommy should go into Parliament, and speak up courageously for the boiling interest. It is useless to hope that Jack Windsor could do it, even if there were no other children; he can count sixpennyworth of halfpence; but if you ask him why, he stares at you. But Tommy is always as pat with an answer, as a Cheap-jack, or a Prime-minister; and sometimes more than he should say to the mother, that brought him up, and fermented him. And now it seems a Providence, Sir Roland, to speak without offence to any one, that he should be M.A. and M.P., without paying anything at all expensive; and make the one defend the other, against the people his dear father could never put up with, though many times they promised him their custom.”

“And never gave it, I’ll answer for that,” Sir Roland replied most truly. “Tommy, you have

heard what your kind mother says; and I hope you will carry out her principles; all of which are of the very highest order."

This settled everything; and next day, my dear mother packed me up, without more than one tear on the top of my shirts, about which she was most particular. But she looked at me very hard, when she had finished; and said—

"Why, mercy on me, child, what a fidget you have become, about your clothes! When you used to go to Oxford, the trouble always was, to get you to look twice into your chest of drawers. But now, one would think, that your own mother knew nothing about what is fit for you to wear! There is something going on down there, I do believe, that you don't think fit to trust me with. I have always understood that those voters of the public are very crafty people, to have to deal with. And they make you promise almost anything they like. Now, don't you go, and promise to marry any of their daughters, without consulting me about it. You are a great catch now, and entitled to look high. Now, bear my words in mind, although I see that

you don't mean to tell me anything. You are just like your father, when it comes to that."

For I felt, that I had no right to tell her a word about Laura Twentifold, until I knew more; and it would have been more than I could bear to have the matter lightly spoken of, and constantly referred to, as a common love-affair; while to me it was so deep, and sacred. And I knew, that she would hurry off at once to Mrs. Windsor, and perhaps Mrs. Chumps, to have a good talk over it; which would have been to me a dreadful profanation. So I made her mind comfortable, and then departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

VOTE FOR TOMMY!

It was indeed high time for me to be stirring, if I meant to be returned for Larkmount; about which I cared supremely little, except as a stepping-stone, towards my true love, and ambition. For, although the influence of the Towers should have been paramount in the borough, as a matter of right and long usage, the times were become so perverted that a brisk opposition was got up; and some Liberal orators had been brought down, who had nothing whatever to do with the place, and cared not a farthing for its interests. My competitor was the owner of a paper-mill, out of which he had made a good lump of money; and he announced his intention to spend it freely, for the national good—

as he presumed to say. As yet, I had only paid a single visit to the enlightened electors, and their wives ; whereas Mr. Squelch had been working hard for months, with his agents, committees, and "organisation" of every kind, in full activity. But Sir Roland was as confident, as ever he could be, and made light of the enemy's start in advance.

"They don't understand human nature," he said ; "all their promises will have got stale, and insipid, and all their bolts of clap-trap will have been shot. In fact they will have bored the poor electors so, that we shall be a welcome novelty. We shall have all the ladies on our side, of course ; and in these days of ballot, that is everything. An elector may promise as much as he pleases ; but he dare not tell a lie about his vote, to his wife."

Also concerning my infinitely higher, and a thousandfold dearer ambition, it was high time for me to be doing my best ; and I grew hot and cold, when I thought of it. Hot, when I heard from Sir Roland—who took the pleasure of a cannibal in telling me, while I could only

reply, "Oh yes," "To be sure," "Very nice," and such like inanities, because of the compact between us,—how my Lord This, and Sir Somebody That, had been staying at the Towers, and were most agreeable, and had shot very fairly, and had admired the neighbourhood, (discharging far too well, I feared, that duty towards their neighbour) and had promised most readily to come again, for the hunting, and the woodcocks, in November.

And cold I became, (quite as cold as a boy, who wants to have his bed warmed, and a treacle-posset, and his head wrapped up in a blanket) whenever I fell back upon my own poor chances, and knew that I must put them to the trial very soon.

This was quite certain to require all my skill, as well as a great deal of good luck at the moment. And one piece of fortune befriended me; to wit, that none of those owners of the earth were there, at the time of my arrival. Two were to come, in about ten days' time; but I hoped to get on a good bit before that, and talk of them as strangers, by the time they

came. For ladies in the country, who have not been spoiled in London, like the faces they are accustomed to.

But in spite of all that, my hopes were low ; not only because of my commercial birth, and want of high style, and of dashing disdain, and a dozen other lofty attributes ; but also because of my natural deficiency in crass weight, and stolid material.

Somebody might say to the most perfect of all created beings, somebody perhaps, with a foot like a duck, and a back like the bole of a Churchyard yew,—“ Well, if I did have a husband at all, I should like one to make a mark, when the ground is wet ; I should like one, who could come round a corner safely, without looking for a church-tower, to see what way the wind is. Ah, I see how he manages so well down here—because you’ve got such a lot of weathercocks ! Miss Twentifold, what would you say to yourself, for slighting good solid Englishmen, if your bridegroom made it a honey-moon indeed, by soaring to the moon, and leaving you to weigh the honey ? ”

Truly, there are people who would say all that; however far beyond their own business it might be. But would they have the chance of saying it? If so, they would be welcome; for the right word would be mine—the word that was worth all the world, and its works.

While I was entering into these thoughts, on the road from the Station to Twentifold Towers, Sir Roland was preparing a little device; in my opinion neither friendly, nor brotherly, nor even seemly. Having returned the day before, he sent a groom with a dog-cart, to bring me and my luggage from the Railway, according to the train agreed upon; and a pleasant drive it would have been, except for the 'troubles invading my heart. But just as we came to a little gate, opening into the grounds, about half a mile from the house, the man said to me,

“If you please, sir, would you mind taking the short cut here to the front? I have got a little job to do at the blacksmith's; and Sir Roland said, I had better not keep you waiting. I shall be home with your traps, about a quarter of an hour after you.”

I was rather glad to stretch my legs with a pleasant walk, on such a lovely afternoon ; so I took my bit of oak, with which I had gone to encounter Professor Brachipod, and cheerfully entered on the footpath way. But when I had walked about a hundred yards, swinging my stick in defiance of dull care, and indulging in a song (which is a favourite of mine, because I have steered so many crews to triumph with it)—

“ The flag that braves a thousand years,
The battle, and the breeze ! ”

Suddenly in a bosky dell, I stood face to face with Sir Roland, and his sister. Laura was amazed ; and so was I. And Sir Roland maliciously kept his eyes intent upon his sister's face.

“ Why, Tommy, what a nightingale you are ! ” he said. “ We took a little stroll, for the chance of this meeting. Well done, old fellow ! I am very glad to see you. I forgot to tell you, Laura, what a treat we might expect. Why, you don't seem at all glad to see friend Tommy ! ”

"Mr. Upmore knows that I am always glad to see him;" the sweet voice, which always made me tremble, replied; as she put her hand in mine, and faced the sun, with a lovelier blush than he can kindle in the west; "but I did not in the least expect to see him; and in these lonely places, one is taken by surprise."

"I shou'd think so indeed!" I exclaimed, with a glance of great indignation at her brother, who was smiling, as calmly as if he had done nothing; "but Sir Roland thought, doubtless, that it was not worth while, to speak of a visitor so insignificant."

"I am sure it was not that," she answered softly; "but he is now so full of politics, that we must excuse him everything. For an hour, I have had to listen to nothing but a lecture upon the Constitution. Oh, I do think the trees are so much more glorious, than the poor little men who cut them down!"

This was uncommonly clever on her part; for it set her brother off upon his favourite tirade, which he never missed a chance of delivering. And so we walked into the avenue, pretending

to listen with the deepest interest ; while I only knew that at my side was Laura ; and she, to make up for the slight put upon me, gave many kind glances, and one or two delicious smiles.

“To-morrow, remember, no waste of time, to-morrow !” her brother said firmly, as soon as he had got to the bottom of the very deep vials of his wrath, by which time we were at the door almost ; “no spooning about trees, or the beauties of nature, or any other beauties,—but good solid work. We shall breakfast early, and have a long day at it. I shall drive you to the “*True-Blue Hotel*” myself, and take with me a fellow, who has a brother at the paper-mills. I have a grand trick against old Squelch, in the bottom of my turbid heart, as some ancient writer calls it.”

“You seem to be getting very fond of tricks ;” cried his sister, as she ran away, to dress for dinner ; “perhaps some will be played upon you, before long.”

Such was my state now of mind, heart, and soul—as well as of body, which had long been in training for a great constitutional effort—

that the paper-mill-man might have passed through his mill, as waste paper, the promises made him. Sir Roland had eight or nine carriages sent from the Towers, of three generations, including some now in use for cock-lofts ; and we took all the children of Larkmount, in batches, for a drive, with their pinnies full of sugar-plums. There was nothing in the Bribery Acts as yet, to make such a proceeding penal ; though now, if a candidate takes a fly out of the eye of a child, he is bound to ask firmly—" My dear, is your father an elector ? Oh, then, I must put that fly back into your eye ; or else my election will be null and void."

But the way these children enjoyed their drives, in a carriage with two horses—for none of them had less—and a big coat of arms, and a hand sticking up ; and the way they drummed their feet, and holloaed—" Vote for Tommy ! Down with Squelch !

" Down with the paper-man, brown and old !
Up with young Tommy, all curls and gold !"

—it was indeed a day to make one proud of the British Constitution.

"We'll do it again. We'll do it three times ; if you are all good true-blue children ;" Sir Roland said to the biggest-voiced ones, when the horses had made a good day of it ; "blue jackets for the boys, and for the pretty girls blue bonnets, or hats, if they stand to their principles. But no yellow, mind you ; touch no dirty yellow. Yellow fever, and jaundice for you, if you do. You shall all have the Gee-gees, to go and vote for Tommy."

"Vote for Tommy ! All curls and gold !"

We heard the clear voices from the hill in chorus, for half a mile, or more, of our homeward road.

Elated as I was, by this triumph of pure principles, and display of unselfish innocence, all I kept asking myself was this—"Will a body, worth the Constituency piled on the top of the Constitution, and the Kingdom on the top of the Continent, ever be persuaded to 'vote for Tommy?' I must know my fate. I can't go on, like this. To-night I shall have to carry on again, as if all I cared about was piano and

back-gammon; and tobacco and billiards, afterwards. Roly is full of resources; but I seem somehow to have lost the very simplest move of tactics! Where are all my wits gone? I am only fit to be in the Government."

But if my wits stood me in no stead, Luck (which is a very far higher power, coming immediate from Heaven), she—for beyond any doubt she is female, like the Angels—down she came, and stood at my right hand, and ordered me to listen, while she did my work for me.

"Roly," Lady Twentifold said, when I had sung my song about the flag, which was now become a plague; "he has done a very hard day's work to-day, and he is not made of iron, as you are. To-morrow, he shall have a whole holiday, with me and Laura, at Crowton and Sunny Bay. You have got business at Ipswich, I know, and will not be back till dinner-time. But if Tommy will not find it dull to come with us, and the day is as fine as to-day has been, we will go and see Sunny Bay—such a pretty place!—and look for shells, and sharks' teeth, and carnelians. Unless you would rather go

practising, Tommy, with the keeper, before they come shooting again? There are plenty of pheasants, in some places, still."

"No; he had better go with you;" Sir Roland answered for me, as he loved to do. "The fates have been against Tommy's shooting so far. He has only been out with me twice at the rabbits, back in the summer; but I find thee apt; and duller should'st thou be than the fat cigar, Tommy—none shall teach thy young idea how to shoot, but I. Go thou with the mother, and play at periwinkles, and sandhoppers, and cowries; an thou wilt."

CHAPTER XVII.

SUNNY BAY.

IN all the wide world, there are lovelier bays than any to be found upon our eastern coast. But people, whose happiness is only comparative, may hie them away to superlative places, of Italy, or of the Cannibal Islands.

But for me, there is no place that need be more lovely, than Sunny Bay, when there is no sun upon it; except what goes out from the shore into the sea. A bay in the west takes an unfair advantage—it looks at its best, when the world is looking at it. While nobody gets up to see the best time of an easterly bay; or even if he does, he has nobody to admire it with him. And what use to admire a thing, by oneself?

Yet anything, fit to be called a bay, is so rare

upon the weary stretch of coast, that it must not be looked in the mouth too closely, nor measured by the red tape of Government survey. If only it have a fairly carven curve, and two definite points not too far apart, a bay it is to be thankful for; and one to be proud of, and rejoice in, if there are hills and trees around it.

Sunny Bay had all of these; and as we drove down the Crowton lane towards it, I thought I had never seen anything so beautiful, the sea being gentle, and the sky clear and sweet. Lady Twentifold was pleased with my delight; for many of her visitors made very little of it.

"It is the prettiest place upon the eastern coast; at least in my humble opinion," she said, "though I do not pretend to be much of a judge. Roly makes light of it, after all his travels. But to me the familiar places are the sweetest; when we think of dear friends, who have seen them with us."

I looked at her eyes, still as beautiful as ever, and full of the warm home-love, which gives soft beauty to the simplest things.

“Laura is like her!” I said to myself;
“Laura is like her. What more can be wished;
except to share so sweet a heart?”

But the first thing to do was to share the dinner, or luncheon perhaps is the stricter word, if strict words are needful in a matter where none was. The carriage was sent away to the Inn at Crowton; for no house here intruded upon the pleasant meeting of land and sea. The rocks were just of the proper height, for table, chairs, and footstools, with bright green fringes, here and there, and mossy banks above the tide, and a crystal rill for the weaker vessels, and white sand for dainty feet to tap. To me it appeared, that all was perfect; except my clumsy self, with hands that trembled, and a heart that beat too fast.

“You are not well, my dear!” Lady Twentifold exclaimed, for she often addressed me kindly thus, when strangers were not present; chiefly perhaps from my fancied likeness to the dear child she had lost. “That canvassing has been too much for you. You are not intended for public life. I wish Roly would not force you

into it so. Now, candidly, which do you enjoy the most; such a day as yesterday, or a day like this?"

With perfect truth, I answered—"Oh, such a day as this, a million times! But, I am as well as I can be, and wonderfully happy, I assure you. May I come, and look for shells with you?"

"To be sure you may. But don't forget your promise to my loves of burrow-ducks. You had better begin, before the tide comes up. Here are the flat trowel, and the long flag basket. Mind, the least touch brings them off, if you take them by surprise. But if you let them know that you want them, they won't come, without being knocked to pieces. My little dears were taken from their nest near here. And the scenery they prefer to everything, is limpets. Now, Laura, if you mean to try another sketch, I think this corner of the rocks, will be the best place for you, according to the way the light falls now. Tommy will follow me, I dare say; as soon as he has done his duty to the little ducks."

This arrangement was not quite the one I should have made, if the ordering had been left to me. Greatly as I admired, and loved "my dear lady," I certainly should have sent her shell-hunting; while I stayed in the corner, where the light fell so nicely, to offer to the nascent work of art the only criticism that ever is judicious — downright, thick-and-thin, admiration. However, not being the marshal of the forces, I made off, with tremendous zeal, to get a stock of limpets.

But, whether the tide was coming in too fast; or whether it was going out, at a pace to make one anxious about the welfare of the sea; or whether the limpets took to jumping, like sand-hoppers, carrying their rocks along with them; or whether there was no strange phenomenon at all, save the one that is strangest yet surest of all—the result, (which I am not in a position to explain, even if it concerned any salaried tide-waiter) was to fetch me very suddenly back to that corner; with the loves of the burrow-ducks left to woo the waves.

My own love was gazing, and, as I hoped,

dreaming, about something that her pencil could not trace. That little reed of so many whispers, with the secret of Midas inside it, was lying on her block ; and the only line it made, was its one true production—its own shadow. But who, that ever moved it, and made it far more eloquent than any poet's tongue, could have granted to it the expression of the face, now leaning over it ?

What sympathy have rocks ? Ever since they first began, the chief object of their life has been to knock human beings (generally on the shins, and knees) and to petrify them in a cave, at every opportunity, and to keep them from getting away from the sea, when the poor pulse is being beaten out of them. Typical are they of all that is stubborn, rugged, and relentless ; and now one of them fetched me a knock on the knee (while my presence of mind was with Laura) that sent me down into a gulley of sand, with my limpet-trowel running into me. This was a pointed steel implement, such as bricklayers use ; and my escape was narrow. A heavy man must have had a very heavy

wound, and perhaps a fatal one; for the handle of the trowel struck the ground before me, while the steel was pointing at my breast. But Nature has allowed me some compensation for the short weight unfairly served out to me,—especially quickness of eye, and of body. In a word, what there is of me is good stuff—though not much to boast of, as you will remind me.

“Oh, what a fearful thing! What a very dreadful thing! Darling Tommy, are you quite dead again? You are always doing it, for the good of others. Oh, put your poor head up, and let me look at you.”

“That is not at all the right thing,” I answered, after a groan or two, to ensure attention; “the proper thing is, for me to look at you. And that is how I got into all this trouble.”

“How good of you, Tommy! How very good of you! But do let me see, where your dreadful wound is. I won’t be afraid of it, I promise you I won’t; because you got it all for my sake. You are always getting wounds, for my sake.”

"Of course I am. And why?" As I put this question, I continued to lie in the pit of my fall; the position being very nice, with Laura added to it. "Because I am all wounds, and all dead, for you."

"Now, don't be so stupid;" she said, with one arm going under my side, in a spirit of inquiry, and the other coming very softly round my neck; to coax me to get up, if I could only find the power. "You know, that you never are stupid, unless you are stunned, or bewildered, through your dreadful heroism. Oh, do let me try to get this fearful thing from under you. I won't cut my hands; and if I do, what can it matter? Very likely, you are bleeding to death, all this time. Why don't you let me see, where your terrible wound is?"

"Because, I have only got a little scratch," I answered; "and I feel so very comfortable, as I am. If you could put your face the very least bit nearer——"

"Do you think, you could lie quiet, while I go and fetch my mother? She has so much presence of mind, and she is——"

"How far away?" I asked in an earnest whisper.

"Oh, nearly a mile along the sands, I am afraid."

"Then I'll get up at once, if you will kindly try to help me. Only promise, that you won't be frightened by a little scratch, dear. It is nothing but the very smallest trifle, I assure you. I know one thing that would make it well at once. But there's no such luck for me as that. Both hands, darling—I may call you that now, mayn't I?"

"Just for the moment, while you are so sad, and helpless. Oh, but it is a very serious wound! Let me tie it up for you; it is bleeding quite fast. I know what to do for you. I'll put some laver to it."

The point of the steel had just gashed my chin—a narrow shave for me; as an inch or two lower would have sent it into my throat, no doubt.

"If you could hold the laver to it, while I run and fetch dear mother——"

"Not for the world. I want you, and you

only. I love your dear mother very warmly, as you know. But oh, Laura, you can never know, how I love you !”

“You are taking an unfair advantage of me now ;” she whispered, as she dropped her eyes, but not her hands ; “I always thought, that you were so upright, and manly.”

“So I am ;” I answered, with my usual candour ; “but I don’t care how I sneak, or what I do ; if I can only get you to be fond of me.”

“What right have you to talk, with your chin in that condition ? You will undo all the good my stupid hands can do you.”

She raised her sweet eyes, to reproach me, as she spoke. And behold they were full of large bright tears !

I only said—“Darling, darling, darling !” each time, if possible, with greater fervour. And she answered, with a smile—“That is what I like to be.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

PREPARE.

THE Government of England never guides us long, without guiding itself into a fearful mess. The Tories, and the Radicals, are much alike in this ; but they differ very widely in their way of getting out of it. The former resign, or appeal to the Country ; which seldom responds to their chivalry. The latter jumble up, (instead of joining) issue ; and jump into Jack-of-the-lantern vagaries, all over any bog, where nobody can shoot them.

This was the policy in practice now. Our foreign relations, being anything but friendly, were to be allowed to please themselves at our expense ; while the gaze of the Country should be turned inward, and its hands employed in tearing their own vitality. Very grand measures were being

prepared, for a fine subversion of established things; Liberal statesmen being quite convinced by their own condition, that the universe was wrong. Of all these projects the Country heard, with its usual self-complacence, growing more and more accustomed to be managed, and driven, by some half-dozen busybodies; according to the usage of democracies.

“We must make a stand somewhere,” said sensible people; but left somebody else to make it. “I draw the line at this,” or “I draw the line at that,” declared the steadfast Briton; but if he drew it anywhere, it was only in the clouds. What could any single hand, or even a hundred stout men, with a hundred hands apiece, avail, when things were gone so far? The only man, who could extinguish the fire, was the very man blowing his large bellows at it; and in the headstrong weakness of his nature, he had shouted for a gentleman smaller than himself, but skilful in the manufacture of malignity.

So little desire had I, to share, in the rough affray impending, and so keenly did I feel my own helplessness, that nothing but Sir Roland’s

stern resolve could have held me to the pledge of public life. All I cared for was, to be allowed to take my Laura, who had promised to give herself to me; and it recked me very little how the public might be governed, if my home might boast so sweet a Queen. But, although Lady Twentifold had given her consent, and waived all obstacles of pride and birth, in the warmth of her good-will towards me, she made it a condition that we must secure the concurrence of her son, as the head of the family, and master of the race of Twentifold. And he (while as friendly to me as ever, and faithful to his promise not to interfere) sternly pronounced that he never would consent, until I had rendered some good service to the Country.

“How am I to do it?” I inquired, with sound reason. “Your condition amounts to a total forbiddance. I have no great abilities, as you are well aware. I shall never be an orator. I cannot even put ten big words together, without breaking down. To move the public ear now, the tongue must thunder forth a thousand thumping words, for every hollow tooth of meaning. And

not only that, but a fellow must be able to work his words, so as to have two kinds of meaning—one for the public, and one for himself; when he finds it important to deny them. No, Roly, I shall never be distinguished. No honest man has any chance of that.”

“How high can you go now, with a little indignation?” he asked, instead of answering me. “I know that you are practising; although you are so crafty, that no one has a bit of chance of seeing you. Why should you be shy of a power, so much rarer than the most entrancing eloquence? Prepare; you can never prepare too much. If I could only do what you can, Tommy, I would have a Dissolution in February, and be the Premier, after a very little practice. Why don’t you let me know, how you get on?”

“Because you don’t deserve it;” I answered with some spirit; and by this time he knew that I had some will of my own. “If you had said to me, about my darling Laura—‘Tommy, you shall have her; and I trust to your own good feeling, not to leave a stone unturned, for the dis-

comfiture of the Radicals '—you might have had me for your dog,—to sit up, or dance round the room, or jump over your handkerchief, at order. That would have been the wiser course for you to take."

I spoke with some emotion ; and to my mind my words appeared altogether unanswerable. But he looked at me steadily, and his face expressed no sense of contrition. Neither did his answer.

"I considered all that ; but I found it would be an entire mistake, so to trust you. Not from any doubt of your honour, my dear fellow, or desire to oblige me, after date. But simply because all your power would be gone. For a twelvemonth, after you have married Laura—supposing that such a thing ever comes to pass—there will be no possibility of stirring up any indignation in your system. She is so con-foundedly sweet-tempered, that you (who have got too much of that already) doubling your stock—as married people do, at first—would regard the loss of India, or even a French invasion, with perfect equanimity ; if they let

you alone with your Laura. And without indignation, you have no wings now. I have taken the trouble to ascertain that point. And my settled conviction is, that after you are married, you will never fly again, until you have a good fight with Laura."

"What a very low, and coarse way you have of putting things!" I exclaimed with—as our Poets say—a mixture of emotions. Rapture, at the thought of ever having Laura; rage, at the base idea of ever falling out with her; and astonishment at Sir Roland's foresight, and grasp of the matter, in all its bearings. "Why, you look upon me, entirely as a subject for experiments!"

"Tommy," he made answer, with a smile so like my Laura's, (whenever she wanted to be funny) that his very worst sentiments might no more annoy me; "you are too fond of regarding things, from a narrow point of view. Science possesses no interest for me. I take facts, as I find them. I care not a stiver why you fly. I find that you do so; and that is enough. Science would wander about for years, asking

everything she met, to explain the reason. But sense is quite satisfied with the mere fact; and proceeds at once to make it useful. Professor Megalow, who knows everything (except the iniquities of the Rads) has told me repeatedly, that there has not been, for some centuries, any Englishman superior (even in his finest moments) to the power of gravitation; except a certain Thomas Upmore. Now, I care not, two skips of a flea, for the fact that there have been, and perhaps still are, some exceptions, among American aboriginals, to a law supposed to be universal. The British public cannot see those fellows; and probably has never heard of them. But the British public can see Tommy; and though capable no longer of amazement—after all it has been dragged through—it is capable still of a mild surprise, and of rubbing its eyes, and of trying to think. Our duty it is, to promote that effort—a sore, and a stiff one at first, no doubt, after five years of Liberal surrender of that right. One rare gift, if properly used, may restore the use of another. Thought in the national body is as rare, as flight in the indi-

vidual. Restore the defunct power, my dear boy; or at least restore the desire for it, which alone must prove fatal to the Radicals. And then, but not till then, will I hail you as my brother, in the flesh, and in the spirit."

"It sounds very well, if I knew but how to do it," I answered with some kindly marvelling at the importance attached to me. "You make it a *sine quâ non* of brotherhood, in the humble being before you, '*ut patriæ sit idoneus, utilis agris.*'"

"Exactly. You could not have put it better. His country, and the agricultural interest—very nearly dead, and with which dies England; as her bitter enemies have long found out. I have no fear of you, when you once get in; which this Autumn Session will enable you to do. The writ will be issued next week, the vacancy having been declared already. Squelch has not a chance; and you shall take your seat formally, so as to be ready for the great fight in the Spring."

"But Chumps?" I asked; "when is Bill coming down? He will do you a great deal

more good than I can. You seem to take it easily, about getting him in for Silverside."

"Because there is no chance of any opposition. Flanker will not resign until February. I have had a little talk with him, and made that square. The oddest part of all is, that I had the hardest work to get out my own warming-pan. The others have behaved like gentlemen. There will be six of us, with the three who still remain. All staunch fellows, and not a fool among them, unless it is your humble servant. Come, and have a game of pyramids, friend Tommy."

Very often, when I thought about Sir Roland Twentifold, I could not help feeling surprised at his devotion to that driest and dullest of all games, at least in my opinion—politics. He was fond of field-sports, a bold rider, a good shot, a great lover of dogs, and of outdoor life, and a hater of town-existence. Yet all these were only light pleasures to him ; while politics, and the strife of parties, seemed to be his passion. Handsome as he was, and a fine young man, with a rent-roll even finer, and

therefore at a high demand in the London market, he passed among all the fair snares, uncaught, with a pleasant smile justly distributed.

I ventured to ask Lady Twentifold once, how she, (so free from prejudice, and so full of good-will to the world at large) could have brought up her son, with such set convictions, and principles, perfectly upright, but sometimes almost too unbending. She looked up, with a kind but rather melancholy smile, from the paper, on which she was making a pencil-sketch of a very grand oak-tree, still in its prime, but as rugged as a ruin.

“Who brought up this tree?” she asked.

“Nature does everything now,” I replied; “it used to be the Lord; but it is Nature now. In a few years more, it will be Science. When we tire of that, it will be Accident. And after that, Something even nobler.”

“But the tree will be the tree;” she answered gently, for her fear about me was that I might grow too scientific, if led into arguments against it; “I prefer to say, that the Almighty made it

so, though few ladies now would agree with me. My dear Tommy, I have no more to do with the bent of Roly's mind, than I have with the twists, and turns, of this tree. He inherits it all from his grandfather; upon, I suppose, what the learned people call, the system of alternation. My dear husband, Roland's father, would never go near Westminster; although we had a house in London then, to see our friends in the season. He sat for Twentibury, in his own chair, or in the saddle, according to the season; and everything went on as nicely as could be. But his father had been of an uncomfortable nature, desiring to make speeches, and to meddle generally, his grandfather having been a strong Jacobite; and the whole of it comes out again in my Roly."

CHAPTER XIX.

FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BENEFIT.

THE alternate system, as Lady Twentifold called it, happily prevails in the national England, as well as in the domestic. When one batch of Statesmen has done a world of harm, and are getting skilful at it—as in three years, or four at the outside, they are sure to learn to be—a cry of “Turn them out” begins first in the gallery.

Then the people who pay more, look up, and soon become inclined to rap their sticks. Before long, a general demand arises, for the room rather than the company, of the individuals on the platform. If they are gentlemen, they make their bow, and retire, heartily wishing bad luck to their successors. But if they are—something that rhymes with Rads, they pretend to hear

nought, till a stunning row arises ; and then they do this, they call out—

“ Policeman, let in all the public, who had got no tickets. They won’t have seen any part of our performance ; and therefore they can judge impartially.”

This was the very thing going on just now. The Government had no leg left to stand on,—a very good reason for their not going out,—but sitting on the quarter, which had been well kicked (to keep Britannia’s in countenance) they were doing what we little boys in Maiden Lane were clever at, (until the new system abstracted our material) that is to say, making go-cartfuls of dust, to blow through a pipe at the inquiring public.

Seven measures, of primary importance, had been promised ; and hecatons of wise rogues had been sent round, to inoculate the public with an itch for home-dust, as a pleasant little change from the national mud-stains. And a flourish of trumpets had filled the air of England, with a Krakatoa volume of that fine material, which contains the germs of everything. In the

gracious speech from (their own cracks in) the Throne, Ministers solemnly informed the Country, that internal repairs were its urgent need, and the only way to make them was to pull it all in pieces, and double all the stuff, with the blessing of the Lord. The good old material had groaned at this; but what is the use of groaning, with the hatchet in the air?

The first need of all was to get rid of land-owners. Land belongs to every one, and therefore to no one. Why have men got feet, except to plant them where they like? Nature has implanted in the human heart a profound desire for the ownership of land. This proves, that everybody must own land. But how, without kicking every other body out? Towards that, the first step is, to kick out present owners. When the others get in, they must be kicked out too. There is no other way to have it cultivated properly; but this will ensure a "succession of crops." A narrow-minded man may fight hard to keep his foot upon what he has spent his hands and mind in earning. But with a little patience, that evil will die out.

Nothing can be simpler than to provide, that after a certain date, no landowner shall be capable of prolonging his unjust tenure, by the suppeditation of heirs to his estate. No physical means will be taken to this end. He will still remain in full enjoyment of every British right, civil, moral, social, and politico-æconomical. But he must not have children; or if he dares to do so, the State will take them from him; and enlist them in the Army, at the usual age of British soldiers—sixteen. Or if they be girls, they will have a free passage to the Chiefs guaranteed to be ravaged by the Boers.

The second great measure was the Dust-bin franchise, or—at sufficient distance from London to ensure intelligence—that of the Dust-pan. A sanitary, not to say a necessary measure, appealing to every heart and hearth.

The third, (whose preamble was eloquence itself, to such an extent that it cannot be cited) enabled the surrender, without consideration, of all strong places, at present held by Her Majesty's forces, upon foreign soil, or soil which (without such British occupation) would

be foreign to this realm. Also, of all British ships of war, whether built to pass over the waves, or beneath them, together with all fittings, and implements of war, (in proportions to be defined by the schedules thereafter) to the following Powers; that is to say, France, Russia, and the Irish Republic, heretofore better known as the Land-League.

The fourth Bill provided for the abolition of every Municipal Corporation, or other corporate, or incorporate, body of burgesses, or ancient freemen, making claim to deal with their own affairs, without licence from the Home Secretary, or the Local Government Board, or the Railway Station, that might be nearest. Unless such Municipal Body could show, that they had not been constituted for more than ten years, and consisted entirely of Liberals.

Short and sweet was the fifth Bill of Government. It had no preamble but this, "Whereas no Englishman knows how to govern himself," and then it enacted, that no man should play cards, chess, back-gammon, quoits, skittles, billiards, bagatelle, or any other game of chance,

or skill, except in the presence of a certified policeman, at a distance of not less than half a mile from any Licensed Victualler, with no more than two sterling pence at stake; every such game to be discontinued, immediately upon the Home-Secretary's yawn, which would be announced throughout all English counties, by telephonic agency. But in Scotland, and Wales, and wherever else the Liberal cause was predominant, all people might play, whenever, wherever, and for whatsoever sum, they pleased.

Of the sixth Bill, the man of the greatest experience, and insight to be found, (at any cubeage of mileage from London, and all its stupidity) could not make head, or tail; though he sat up, until a policeman from the Home Department ordered him to bed. The only theory at all to be entertained about it, was that the gentleman, entrusted with the draft, had taken another, to inspire him for his labours; or else had imbibed, too deeply perhaps, the spirit of his subject. It was all about Ireland, (from which the great St. Patrick

expelled all the devils, on the herd of swine system,—except that they stopped at home, as well as swam the Channel) for nothing can ever convey, to the unmeasurable apogee of Radical brains, the wisdom of leaving unstirred Camerina. Since that party, by means of cold summers and hot ravings, stuck their heels into the Country's ribs, they had never allowed it to chew anything, but black wild oats of Ireland. Perish India, perish Colonies, perish England, perish everything, except savages who stab all kindness! And their last panacea was this great measure,—to govern Ireland, according to Irish ideas. “Whereas no Irishman obeys the laws, and thereby incurs, illegally, irrationally, and unjustly, the stigma of lawlessness; be it enacted, that after the passing of this Act, there shall be no laws in Ireland.” With the aid of Hibernian Members, this Bill was certain to pass; and it could do no harm.

The seventh, and last, of the measures, upon which the Government staked its existence, (although they had fifty-two more, which they pledged themselves to carry, if shoved on

much) was sensible, and simple, and consistent with all Legislation in that province. It merely prohibited the opening of flowers, whether under glass, or out of doors, after six o'clock p.m. Forasmuch as a scientific Member had assured the Licensed Anti-Victualler, that divers of them are guilty of intoxicating agency.

CHAPTER XX.

FAIR COUNSEL.

“OF all truths, the surest is the truth well established by the behaviour of Britons for many years now,—one man may steal a horse and canter away, with every hat (even the owner’s) tossed up, in applause of the brilliant proceeding; while the same man’s first cousin, (who peeped through the hedge, at the dew on grass, or the daisies) lies groaning in the stocks, and perhaps touches his hat to the luck, which rides over everything. If any other man, of any English era, from Heptarchy to Hecatarchy, (that last child of Hecate) had stolen from his happy mead, and lashed into foam, and thrown upon his knees, with his strong back broken, that fine old nag the British Constitution; after the

horse he would have had the cart—which is not his own order of placing them—and the cart would have been the one that drives to Tyburn.”

Thus said Sir Roland. But owning no land, and no sentiments (therewith transmitted, and tripled at every other generation) I scarcely knew who had been stealing the horse, and only hoped that the nag would come home again. For a horse is the most sacred of all property, infinitely dearer than house, wife, or child—according to the precedents of English law—and very likely he deserves it.

But what did I care about horses, or hedges, or the clever man who made the horse jump the hedge, (ready-saddled that he might steal him) or even the state of the British Constitution, which passes through so many horse-chanting hands? My convictions were solid, and their grounds of the same character; all grouted in with concrete, and pointed with best Portland cement, and not a bit of lime-blow anywhere, nor any sign of job-work to be found in them. Yet I am not ashamed to say,—because I shall secure all

honest sympathies—that if my orders had been, to make tea for the man who stole the horse, and a bran-mash and litter, for the animal thus stolen, and to whistle to both of them, while they did their duties; the teapot, and the bucket, and the other necessities, would not have been out of the reach of my arm.

But, why? As everybody has taken to ask now. “Why do you do this? And why don’t you do that?” The last thing that any man should have to explain; because it leads him into a tremendous lot of lies. He has not the least idea, why he did a single one of them. But he can’t say that; and he sets to with after-thoughts, like a man who builds his house of the chimney-pots.

In my case, however, there is no hard why. To the youngest, (or even the oldest) intelligence, the flexibility of my principles, (though granitic as above) needs no explanation, when I set before them Laura.

“Dear Tommy, don’t be made a party man;” she said to me, just before Parliament met, and while I was holding a skein of floss-silk (which

is difficult stuff to manage) that she might wind it for some lovely work.

“You are the party that makes me one;” I answered, with a sigh, to earn some gratitude; “can anybody question the purity of my motives, when he looks at you, dear?”

“I don’t want compliments, instead of common sense, Tommy. Of politics I know next to nothing, although I hear so much every day. But all I hear is upon one side so much, that I cannot help thinking, what the other side may be; and sometimes I should like you to try it.”

“Darling, have you any thought, that has not its image, and counterpart with me? Whatever passes through your most beautiful mind, at the very same moment comes through mine. Only yours is so very superior.”

“No, Tommy, no. You must never say that, because I shall fear that you are laughing at me. Now, don’t drop the silk—no, I don’t look entrancing; and there was nothing whatever in the situation, to compel you to do it, or me to allow it. You keep on manufacturing excuses of that sort. And a rising Statesman should be

above such conduct. Where was I? You have quite deranged my thoughts. Oh, about the present state of the nation, to be sure! Roly is a great alarmist; but I cannot see any harm at all going on; and I do hate wars, and faction-fights. Why need you go up, to take your seat at all? My father was in Parliament continually; but he took care never to go near it."

"Neither would I, if I could help it, Laura. But the times are very different now. I have not the least chance, dear, of ever attaining what I long for most in all the world, except by going up; and more than that, doing something to satisfy your dear brother."

"Well, promise me one thing. Make beautiful speeches, (as you ought to do, after all your practice, in saying fine things to me every day) and so become a leader of great principles; but try not to be harsh with any one. It would spoil your nature, which is so sweet, and cheerful. Remember that the gentlemen, you disagree with, have a right to their own opinions, and a claim to be treated as gentlemen; instead

of being abused—oh, in shocking language ! Sometimes Roland makes me stare.”

“He is very hot indeed,” I could not help admitting, as I smiled at the horror on the sweet kind face. “But remember, dearest, that they give him reason ; for they care very little what they say themselves. And much worse than that, is what they do ; at least in his honest opinion. He believes them to be ruining his Country. Can a warm-hearted young man be expected to sprinkle rose-water on the destroyers of his Country ?”

“That is the opposite extreme ;” she insisted, with more common sense than could be gainsaid. “Surely he might express what he feels, in forcible language ; without imputing bad motives, and all sorts of wickedness, to people who may be doing harm, but are not doing it on purpose. At any rate, Tommy,—though he is past cure, and soon puts me down, if I dare to say a word—I shall cease to believe, that you care for me, if I hear of your going on so.”

Well, here was a cleft stick for me to be in ! If I should fail to prove myself a red-hot Tory

Sir Roland would have none of me. Whereas, if I won his good-will in that way, his sister would throw me over. Not that she put it so coarsely as that ; but when a girl says, that she will not believe in a man's affection for her, it generally means that her own for him will be in still greater danger. My fortune is, always to get into scrapes ; and my nature, to get out of them.

When I returned to "Placid Bower," as the elected of Larkmount-on-the-Hill, (for paper had not the least chance against soap) I found my dear mother in a state of much excitement, and ready to believe almost anything.

Now, why does excitement so multiply the powers of faith, when it ought to do the opposite ? However, so it does ; and the slaves of "pure reason" are as credulous as any, in their ardour for it.

But my dear mother, (though the kindest-hearted, and most liberal-minded of nearly all women) always considered it an insult, to have pure reason, in any form, applied to her. And right she was, when the premises were hers, and she had bought out even the Ground-landlord.

“Tommy,” she said, “I am always most particular, in my expressions about the Government. Your father took some excellent Government contracts, through his heroism with the three-inch hose ; otherwise how could we have bought this house ? It is useless for you to talk, as if that Government was not the same as this one. That may be true ; but it proves nothing. A Government must be the Government ; and the Government it was, that paid us so much money. So that I will hear no complaints against them, for this trifle, or for that ; because of all things, I have such a scorn for ingratitude. We may not like everything they do, about cards, and Policemen, and Railway Stations, and preventing my Evening Primroses, because of the great abilities of Lord Beaconsfield. But we must not be selfish, my dear son, nor expect to have everything to our liking. In a penny evening paper, which seems to be clever, and writes about everything, I have found out everything they mean to do ; and I quite agreed with him, that stupid people may misunderstand it. For instance, I don’t like giving

up the fleet; though no doubt it is a most expensive thing, and your dear Uncle William is now no more. But the first, and greatest of the Acts they mean to do, appears to me like a sign-post, with the finger of Providence upon it. Not that I should ever feel the very least desire. And nothing could come of it, in my time, of course. But it would be so beautiful for you, my dear!"

It took me some time, to discover what this meant. And my mother was not very anxious to explain. But at last I found out, that the sign-post pointed to my possession of the Twentifold estates, if Sir Roland were prohibited from having any heirs! That one of the best and simplest of her sex should have strayed into the snare of covetousness, (set by all mesasures, that dabble with property) determined me at once, to fight that measure to the utmost.

Bill Chumps was come back from his wedding tour (having been called to the bar, and the altar, one day after each other) but not as yet called into Parliament, by the voice of Sir Roland Twentifold. His father gave a dinner

at "*The Best End of the Scrag*," because his own house was not large enough; and no man, who was there, ever tastes a fine joint, without saying—"Ah, but you should have had a cut from the baron, and the saddle of old Chumps, that day. I have often tasted fine meat; but by George, sir, I never knew what velvet was till then!" There was not a foreign kickshaw handed round; but any man, who wanted unintelligible compounds, might go and fill his spoon, at the sideboard.

Sir Roland was there, and made the speech of the evening, a great deal better than Bill's—for Bill got his at the back of his tongue beforehand, and then forgot every word of it; and his heart (being meant to play second fiddle) refused to come up, and take first one. But Roly did really roll it out, in a style which gave me great hopes, that he might upset most of the seven Bills of the enemy, without calling upon my poor resources. And we had a jolly evening, I can assure you; though there is no time to say any more about it now.

In return, I invited (with mother's good leave)

a snug little party of loyal, enlightened, and truly large-hearted Conservatives to dinner, at our humble "Placid Bower," on the Monday evening, with the Session beginning on the following day. Mr. Windsor was there, and my old friend Jack (now growing very partial to Belinda Chumps), as well as Mr. Peelings, the great potato-dealer, Mr. Blewitt of the Indigo factory, and of course Mr. Chumps, and his son William, and several other gentlemen, one of whom was the owner of "*The Pratt Street Express*," a sound and influential journal. The object of the dinner was in the foremost place to dine; and then to deliver, for my comfort and direction, the safest, most practical, and constitutional counsels, ever yet vouchsafed to any youthful representative.

Of all these gentlemen, Jack included, there was not one but regarded me as sent into Parliament for his own use and benefit, as well as for a high example of wisdom, after following his advice. But the worst of it was, that no two of them gave me the same advice, beyond general precepts—to look sharp, to be cautious,

to keep my pluck up. As soon as I wanted to thread my needle, and make my coat with their furnishing—behold, it was not even yarn, or I might say wool, grown long enough for combing. They had thought out none of the things they talked of; and the round-hand lessons in a copy-book would serve me as good a turn as theirs.

However, they all agreed in condemning all the seven great measures of the Government; although upon widely diverse grounds, disagreeing very warmly, as to what their badness was. And this made me doubt, when I came to dwell upon it, whether after all they could be so very bad. When a dog is tail-piped, sympathy arises in every bosom that has tails behind it; as soon as he is pelted, his merits grow on every one, who cannot find a stone to throw at him; but let him have sticks, bottles, tiles, flints, brick-bats, each expressive of a different stand point, yet all promiscuously hurled at him,—and to every candid mind, that cannot get the window open, what is he, before he turns the corner? Why, a hero, a martyr, a saint of a dog.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RIGHT WAY TO SURRENDER.

It is not in my power, to describe to you all the mixture, or the magnitude, of my feelings, when I entered what our noble journalists—who choose words, like oysters, by their fatness—call the “Portals of St. Stephen.”

It is superfluous to say, that a policeman met me; the *differentia* of that species being to jump up (like the teeth of Cadmus) outside of all requirement, and to vanish (like Berenice’s hair) inside it.

“You can’t come in here, young man.” He made this remark (looking over my head, for his stature was six feet four, and his mouth opened upwards, as all good police-mouths do) in a tone, which conveyed that it was unofficial, and required some apology for excess of affability.

"Peeler, yes he can though! He have a right in there;" exclaimed a voice behind me. "He don't look very nobby p'raps, with all that hair, but he have the same right as I have, Master Bobby. In marches Tommy Upmore, M.P. Tommy, now won't you shake hands with me? One old friend is worth a score of new ones. Without me, so help me Sammy, never would you be here, my boy! But I bears no malice, if your mind is the same. Shake hands, Tommy. There's worse gen'lemen to be found, than Joseph Cowle, Esquire, M.P."

Perhaps I have never received, or inflicted, a stronger sensation of surprise. This may have been, to find my own importance (which must have been growing too rankly) assaulted by a policeman, and asserted by a chimney-sweep.

"Mr. Cowl?" I asked, while giving him my hand; though his own would not have been the worse for a "*repetatur haustas*" of the little boiler engine; "Have you quite recovered from your dreadful cold?"

"All Liberals suffers from throatiness," he

replied ; “ same as Tories does from cheekiness. M.P. for Chimneystacks now I am, Tommy ; with an *e* to the tail of my name as well. The missus would have it, with her education ; though beyond me to pronounce it, without ‘ Cowly.’ How you are going up the tree, hot cockles ! ”

“ And you up the chimney ! ” I replied, with a glance at his dress, which was worthy of the first of May. “ I never could have guessed who you were ; and how could you recognise me, Mr. Cowly ? ”

“ Come now ! Come now ! ” He spoke, as a groom to a horse cutting too many capers. “ After the print of you, on the title-page of all the leading magazines—‘ Head of hair unparalleled outside the Polar regions, 3s. 6d. per bottle, and then throw away your combs ! ’ Ah, Tommy, dust comes perffessional to me. We know what sends you into this here crib. Five hundred a week, and a royalty on sales. Pays better than ledgery slating ! ”

I had heard of these absurd reports ere now, and I never hope to hear the last of them. Is

there any credulity, among barbarians, a hundredth part as wild as that of the British public, in such matters? People of fair common sense, and with some experience of the world, believed that I was making an enormous income, by lending my name, and my countenance—full-front, profile, and three-quarters—to fellows who advertised hair-oil, balsams, electric, and fifty other sorts of comb, and even my own father's speciality, soap (such as cured all the convicts)—not one of whom, I deeply regret to assure you, upon my honour, as the member for Larkmount, ever paid me a shilling, or even asked me to dinner!

But one is apt to dwell too much upon such trifles. If I have put a penny (one per cent., honest) into any enterprising tradesman's pocket, I make him a present of the honest portion, which would not be worth legal expenses.

Questions of a thousandfold more importance thronged upon me now, as I entered the House, under convoy of the Member for Chimneystacks, who whispered to me, that the Dust-pan Bill was mainly of his own suggestion.

Having been introduced already, at the end of the Autumnal sitting, I did not require his services in that way, but found a quiet corner for my hat, and thought of the time when I put down my trencher some five years ago in the chapel of *Corpus*.

Then we rushed to hear the Royal Speech, rather like a mob of workmen, when the bell rings; and Sir Roland, whose strength lay in hurrying others more than himself, appeared quite at his leisure, and laughed, as he shook my hand, to find it trembling.

"You'll soon get over that;" he said, as if he had been some fifty years in Parliament. "But who is your friend, with the dark complexion?"

I told him the story; but he did not laugh at all heartily, as I had expected.

"An exceedingly dangerous fellow," he exclaimed. "To be sure, I know all about him now. One of the cleverest of all the Clasts, with the true pass-word for the Cabinet. An anarchist, a socialist, a communist, and everything else that rhymes with fist, which is the only tool to meet them with. Chumps is

the man for such fellows ; but we shall not have him here for a fortnight. There now, Faithful Commons, go home. But they will have no homes to go to, except a common, if all this comes to pass. And yet, how well it has been made to sound, for people who do not care for sense ! ”

I was not of his opinion, upon that point. To my simple mind, plain English words, mainly of English birth, and showing (one after other) what they mean, without any tangles or knots in them, are the right words to move the English heart. Whoever speaks thus, wins all my ears, and goes a long way towards winning my heart ; because he is my brother Englishman. And even for sound, what power is there, whatever the scowl of the cloud may be, in long foreign thunder, below the horizon, and perhaps meaning something, in Italy, or Greece ? But the Royal Speech, as usual, meant nothing anywhere ; any more than the poor man, who foretells the weather.

“ A greenhorn like you, Tommy,” said Sir Roland, as if he had served at least through the

Long Parliament, "would expect a great fight, and a smash-up, at once, to follow up that palaver. But Thong, who knows everything, tells me that nothing, except little Irish rows, will be on for a fortnight. And we can do a heap more good, he says, by going down to Silverside, and making Chumps safe, than by hanging about for any trumpery divisions. It is jolly to see a fellow in his troubles. Suppose we start to-morrow?"

"With all my heart;" I answered. And in saying this, I had used the right words, at the right moment. Not that I cared to see Bill in the straw so much, although it is a pleasant spectacle; but that I did long, with all my heart, to hear Laura's opinion on politics, with the whole of Her Majesty's speech cut out, and pasted up—as I had told her to do it—in the corner of my little room, where I meditated, and had left a woolly outline of my head against the wall.

Our work was to be at Silverside; where Bill and his father already were in residence, having taken the front that looked over the porch, on

the High Street side of the "*Bull-and-Mouth Hotel*." William Chumps, Esquire, had brought down "his lady, a lovely bride of some nineteen summers," as the *Silverside Constitutional* described her, though I could depose that she was four and twenty, being eleven months older than myself, and no bride of any summer at all, but married to Bill for three months of the winter. There was no taint of envy in my feelings. She certainly looked very handsome, and had spent a good lump of her £12,000 in apparel; and Bill, of course, was mightily proud of her. But to dream, for a moment, that I was pining, as her melancholy manner towards me conveyed, —I longed very often to bring my Laura; but a scene of that kind was not fitted for her! Patriotic sentiments repressed my private anger; and I worked very hard for Bill; and wrote him some good posters.

"Now, I am off for the *Towers*," I said to Sir Roland, only two days before the one fixed for the poll; "I can't stand any more of this, and Bill cannot want me any longer. I have had the very kindest letters from your mother; and

if you prefer racket to home-life, I don't. I will meet you in London, any day you may appoint. But I must have a little quiet first. 'Tis as bad as a boat-race every day; and at Henley once I lost my nerve, from too much of it, and we got whacked."

"I see;" he replied, as he was fond of doing. "Another man's laurels, wreathed with orange-blossom, are hard to behold philosophically. Go, Tommy, go and recruit your roses. But remember our compact. You have won nothing yet."

He might say what he pleased, when he smiled like Laura; though his smile was strength, and hers was sweetness. That evening, I arrived where I was welcome; and the lovely blush, and soft whisper of a kiss, were worth a world of politics, and Parliament.

The privilege of changing their minds has always been handsomely yielded to fair ladies; so long as they do not change therewith their precious hearts, and pure affections. I found my Laura in a vastly different political vein from her previous one. She had taken some

peeps into the newspapers, not at all for the sake of the public, but for mine ; and all the deep warmth of her nature was stirred, by the Radical outrage, to her country and her home.

“About the suffrage, and the Constitution, and the Abstinence-cause, I know nothing, or less than nothing—as gentlemen express it, though I don’t see how there can be less than nothing ;” she said to me, the very day after my arrival. “But about right and wrong, everybody has a right to some opinion. For poor landowners, what is it but robbery, downright robbery, to take away their land, and compel them to start afresh to earn more ? But, oh, Tommy, Tommy, it takes all my breath away, to think of surrendering the English fleet to the bitterest enemies of England ! Oh, come in here, that I may show you something it will strengthen all your principles to see.”

There are few things more impressive to the model British mind—of which mine is, I am proud to say, a very tidy specimen—than a genuine series of ancestors in oil, proved (by internal and external evidence) extraneous to

Wardour Street. Monuments perhaps have a still grander savour, especially recumbent figures of the Knight, and his Lady, on a slab together, with the little ones that failed to come to harm, sculpturally coming up, like frogs for the blessing. But these are very rarely to be found in any Chancel, or Chapel, by the dozen; while the pictures have an old family habit of keeping together. And to me it appeared that the Twentifold race were what our dear cousins, (who supply our slang, after stealing our standards) call "real grit," for never having driven me, or anybody else, into this caravan of dead Twentifolds. For my gallery of ancestors was restricted to a photograph of my dear father, and an ancient daguerreotype of Uncle Bill.

"Oh, Laura," I cried, when I saw them, stretching, (like the windows of a Stop-at-all Stations-train) for a furlong without any corner; "how can you look at all these great people, and come down from them, to a nobody like me?"

"Hush!" she said. "How dare you talk

like that? I didn't bring you here, to be impudent, Tommy."

"But I am astonished," I replied, "astonished, that with all these looking at you, you can look at me!"

"What is there astonishing in it?" she asked, coming up, and putting both hands on my shoulders. "It is, because I love you, dear."

At any other time, I must have kissed her, for those simple, and noble words. It was no thought of all those ancestors that robbed me of that pleasure; but I could not bear that she should look into my eyes, and see how full they were of tears. Then I ventured to put my arm round her waist, and she gave me her left hand, to comfort me.

"Here's the fine old gentleman, I brought you in to look at;" her voice was quite gay again, to pass the fuss over; "does he look, as if he would surrender our fleet, to the enemies of England?"

"He looks fitter to make all her enemies surrender. What a resolute face, and how his

foot is planted ! Ah, if we had any man to plant his foot, and shut his mouth in that style, now ! All open mouth now—as Roly says—open mouth, tongue instead of chin, and instead of strong fist, chattering fingers. A man of that stamp can never have belonged to any time later than Nelson’s. No Government would employ him now, in any of our trumpery ‘demonstrations.’ Let me look at him. It does me good.”

The picture, being by no well-known artist, would doubtless be called a daub, by all art-critics rightly flourishing. But to me it seemed full of life and spirit, not always to be found in mighty masters. An Admiral of the ancient days, and himself growing ancient, stood at a gangway before his men, to repel assault of boarders. In his right hand was a big sword, flashing almost as brightly as his eyes, while his left hand pointed to the Union-jack, waving through a cloud of smoke above.

“Who was he ?” I asked. “He means to do it. I should have been sorry to board that ship ?”

She drew from behind the frame a plate of gilt metal, engraved in red, "Admiral Sir Rupert Towers-Twentifold, A.D. 1740."

"Yes, he did it;" she answered, with her eyes almost as bright as his; "He cut three men down, with his own hand, and then leaped on board the Spanish ship, drove the crew below, and captured it. He was the sixth back in straight line from Roly; and Roly sometimes looks exactly like him. That makes it my favourite picture of them all. Though I like Roly better, when he looks quiet."

"It won't do to look quiet always;" I replied, with the spirit of the conflict caught; "except for such sweet souls as you. Darling, you make lovely patchwork. Will you do a little job for me, without a word to any one?"

CHAPTER XXII.

SPARS.

THE Government had intended wisely to deal the first of their seven great blows at the weal of their hostile Country, with the Bill (which they were sure to pass) for swamping the votes of the enemy. With this once done, to suit their book, any dissolution of Parliament must redound to their sole benefit. But this pretty plot was not played out, according to arrangement; for the Irish members stopped it.

These, although they had their own bear-garden now in College Green, found treason there too orthodox to afford any pure enjoyment, and made a point of coming over to keep their pepper-boxes hot; which, according to the Kill-England Compact, were to be at their service

for ever. And still sticking together—like bots in a horse, though without any humour apparent—they made everything go, or not go, according to their own appetite.

Their appetite now was all wide-mouth, for the third part of our fleet, protocolled to them ; and with national ardour, and stupidity, they roared for the passing of that Bill at once ; and the Government, of course, gave way to them. Stupidity I say, because if they had waited for the Dust-pan Bill, they would have had our fleet entire.

“Gentlemen, I begin to have some little hope now ;” Sir Roland said to us, as soon as we had finished an excellent dinner, as his guests, at the *Cockles* Club—for so everybody calls the “Horatius Cocles” at Westminster Bridge. There were twenty of us there, all M.P.’s ; and not one would have feared to take a header off the bridge, having Mr. Panclast under his arm. “To-morrow the fight begins ; and the enemy (through his own currish nature) affords us one more chance. If he had taken up the dust-pan first, with the regiment behind him that sucks

his buttons, he must have swept everything before him. But in dread of O'Woundy, and Digger, he takes up the craze every Briton cries shame at, before he has thoroughly gagged them. I need not remind you, that public opinion, as it used to be called, is against this Bill, more than all the others put together. But public opinion is a dead letter now; since the Press tried to pass their own for it. And even if it had the Press to back it, the Hecatons would light their pipes with it. To me it appears that our last chance lies in the ghost, long expatriated, of patriotism; if only it might for one half-hour revisit the glimpses of this English moon. But what says our excellent and powerful ally, the newly elected of Silver-side?"

Bill, though he had only got his seat three days, had already made two speeches; and being always full of argument, he was glad to make another. But, as he made another, containing the very same observations in the House, next day, I need not report what he said just now. Not that I would blame any man, for saying the

same things twice, or twenty times. No man can put a new head to his hammer, every time he thumps a block of coal; and we Britons used to be a fine block of Wallsend, hard to splinter, and impossible to crack, without fifty good thumps in the hole of each other. The Government knew this, and made their fire of the rubble.

Our case, though the best that could possibly be found, seemed likely to be a bad one. Mr. Thong, who knew exactly how every vote would go, reported that the best we could hope for was a minority of fifty. Every Irishman, of course, would vote for the glory of Ireland, and the disgrace of Great Britain. Except some half-dozen, who had been in our Army, or Navy, and still had some regard for the old flag. So that our hearts were very gloomy, when the great debate began.

The Government introduced their Bill, with the old clap-traps about "universal peace, goodwill everywhere, fraternity of nations, symmetry, harmony, beneficence of commerce, expansion of the intellect, and so on. To all these

noble things now there remained one wretched little obstacle, which it was our duty and our privilege to remove at once, the leprous stain of blood-guiltiness, and greed"—in the mill of their eloquence they ground up metaphors—"and that obstacle was the ambition of England. If once we proffered, to the world at large, this magnificent pledge of our candour, confidence, and chivalrous resolve not to raise our hands against those who might indeed appear desirous to trample on our bodies, but would abstain, when they found them so defenceless,—then, and not till then, should we be able to claim the proud title of promoters of the glorious cause of humanity." There was a great deal more, even finer than this; but is it not written in the chronicles of Hansard?

The Liberal benches were rent with explosions of applause, like an ancient fig tree; while on our side presently, an honourable Member gained earnest attention, by imitating to a nicety the clucking of a hen, that calls her chicks together.

Being new to the manners of the House, and

zealous upon all points of order, up I jumped, and began to run about, trying to catch with my hat the Dame Partlet, so intrusive in high places. Roars of laughter were my reward, the greatest of great guns joining in ; and even the omnipotent premier gave me a smile of extraordinary sweetness. I had earned the good-will of the House for ever ; and until I am grey, I shall be called " Green Tommy."

Now, this may seem a very small, and childish affair, at a time most truly momentous ; and some will accuse me of my accustomed triviality in recounting it. But without fear of contradiction from any then present, and able to form opinion, whether Liberal or Conservative, I say that the cluck of an imaginary hen changed the fortunes of Great Britain, for at least ten years ; though her foes will prevail in the end, no doubt. That is to say, unless there is, from time to time—as there ought to be, according to analogy—an outbreak of savage fury, havoc, mad bestiality, and wallowing murder, in that centre, heart, soul, brain, Queen, star, crown, sun, and Deity of the universe, which Mr. Windsor calls

“Parree.” Insanity there makes London sane; as a man I know well, who cut down his best friend—too late, alas ! for any but the Coroner—has been afraid ever since to go near a belfry.

But the turn, by which that cluck saved our *Capitol*, had nothing to do with either vigilance, or terror, but simply led up to a condition of good humour. Good humour, which is sure to come after a laugh, and a boyish laugh especially, brings back to the mind of a man, for a moment, that he is not the only man in the world. He may not be able to believe it very long, and is quite certain not to remember it; still, even to fancy that there are some others, improves his behaviour, a good bit.

The Government saw, that the vein of the moment was not at all in their favour; and two of the Cabinet went to crave leave of the Irish Members, to put off the division. Sir Roland told me, that he hoped they would get it; while I, knowing nothing of tactics, hoped that the matter might be settled out of hand, while the Members appeared so light-hearted. For surely no Briton, unless in “the blues,”—which all

Rads, from disease of the conscience, suffer—would vote for abandoning every stick and stone, that our fathers gave their poor brave lives for. But Roly was right, and I was wrong; as appeared most plainly afterwards. The Irish captain, desiring for a reason of his own, to oblige the prime-minister, gave orders that the debate might be adjourned, if the Government particularly wished it.

This, as you will see, proved a good chance for us. But to take things in their proper order, refreshing my memory by the notes of the Member for Silverside, who had learned shorthand, I find pretty nearly as follows.

When the Bill was entirely before the House—in all its perfect symmetry, according to their language, in all its naked enormity, according to ours—the Leader of the Opposition rose, and in the most courteous and placid manner (which alone might have proved, by its difference from theirs, on which side sense and justice lay) moved, not the entire rejection of the Bill—for that appeared too hopeless, in the teeth of their vast majority—but a moderate amend-

ment, which had been considered (as half a loaf is better than no bread) to be the utmost an Englishman could hope for. Inasmuch as our foreign possessions, and our fleet, were declared by the voice of the Universe, to be a standing menace to civilization, and an outrage to all foreign sentiment, he proposed that the fortresses should be dismantled, and the fleet blown up, instead of being handed over intact, for the use of our enemies. This enraged the Government, almost more than the direct negation would have done. The usual outcry against half-measures arose; and to support it, arose Mr. I. Beright.

This was a very great orator, one of the greatest of all recent times; because he possessed, what our ancestors had, but we for the most part have lost,—the power of putting plain meaning into plain words. A very great man as well, from the clearness, and solid consistence of his mind; and even yet greater he might have been, if Nature had endowed him with the power also of saying “I be wrong,” sometimes. However, it was a real treat to hear

him, whatever one's opinion of his might be ; because there was no need to fish for his meaning, and be vexed with oneself, for not catching it. Indeed, so immense was the force of his words, and his aspect so large and commanding, that it took me a long time to set up again my own weak convictions, against his strong ones. Luckily, however, some little fellows followed, who, doing their utmost to deepen his track, succeeded very nicely in obliterating it ; like a lot of children following a giant in the snow. Several members also of the Opposition spoke, appealing to the buried bones of patriotic principle, and reading long extracts from obsolete speeches, and solemn declarations of the present premier ; all of which were capable of being explained away, whenever there was no denying them. And at half-past two, the debate was adjourned, on the motion of Lord Grando Crushbill.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BATTLE, AND THE BREEZE.

ALL Europe had concluded long ago, that the Government of England had left itself no other blunder to commit, and no further disgrace to fall into. But all Europe was wrong in this conclusion; for before our debate came on again, tidings of a new disaster, and one more foul scorn to British blood, and heart, rang through the streets of London. Those streets were, by this time, so well used to the sound of surrenders, and massacres, seizures by Russia of this, and of that, and French bombardment of Britons, that they took it as calmly as the passing of the plague-cart in September, 1665. Men, full of business, shook their heads at the newsboys, (who spoil their own traffic with

chalk, as England has done with her flourish of "free-trade") and the extra editions of the evening papers went back to their offices, except a few copies, sold to visitors wise enough to live far north. In short, the public knew it all, without paying, and kept all their half-pence, to pay for the result.

We, who were punctual, heard it all (after prayers) announced, in a telegraphic voice; as a thing which should go in at one ear, and out at the other, in every head giving up its brains, (as every head, that has got any, does) to the only one worth counting. The Liberal Members seemed thankful for the news; because we could scarcely have rescued the hero, and redeemed our faith, for twelve hundred pounds; and because it set us free, to look after some other, who would truckle more kindly, and pay his own way. But we thought it very bad—very bad indeed; though, of course, it was treason to say so. And none of us saw any light in it; which shows that our eyes were not open.

This piece (of a piece with the rest) of foreign

news, happened to arrive on a Saturday ; and we (for the sake of the fifty-two reforms) had a Saturday sitting already ; which lasted in fact until Church-time on Sunday, and must have despatched any other prime-minister to a place, where even he would scarcely hold all preferment. However, his influence adjourned the fourth commandment—as it used to treat the third—even in the souls of Scotchmen.

For the few, who like to see one of our disasters discussed upon its merits, the best chance is, when the news arrives near about noon of Saturday. It is too late then, for the evening papers to shed their mild light upon it, even if they all employed the gentleman, who settles (at a glance, and a stroke) all the monthly labour of the magazines. And as for the Sunday papers, any that were not out on Friday night (reversing the premier's chronology) have shut their frames now, and are working off. This is as it should be, enabling a sound Briton to go to church, without praying for the Communion Service.

Then upon Monday morning, like a string of

horses who have observed the sabbath, with a loud neigh and caper, rush forth the morning papers. They swallow up the earth, like the horse of Job, trample under foot a few writers of fiction—as though they had none on their own backs—scatter the thunder of their neck (or cheek) upon every man they have no fear of, and with one or two quiet exceptions, go down upon their knees, for the jockey of the period to mount them, if he deigns.

But on this Monday morning, they came out mildly, (the most rampant nag knows where his oats are kept) sniffing the air for the direction of the breeze ; and going gingerly, as if some English flint remained. And they found very speedily, and so did we, that the great steam-roller had not crushed out every power of spark from our ancient metal.

“ The tone of the Press is changed, at last ; ” Sir Roland Twentifold said to me, when the House was meeting for the final issue ; “ too late to help their Country much ; but in time to give waverers some excuse for wavering. There will be as full a House, as ever was known. But

our seats are safe. Come, and let me introduce you to Lord Grando."

This was the nobleman who had lately come to the forefront of honour, and of justice ; in right of plain language, clear mind, and fine pluck. Whether he were a fine Christian or not, is more than I can pretend to say, but he observed one leading precept, infinitely better than his great opponent. When men reviled him, and persecuted him, and said all manner of evil against him, he rejoiced, and was exceeding glad. And of this joy he had ample store, to last for many generations. "*Horrida grando*," was his name with the Rads ; and he always came down upon them, like a pelt of hail. Yet he carried no frost in his tail ; for his manner was vigorous, warm, and stimulating.

"I am to begin, as you know ;" he said, with a gay smile, to Sir Roland, in whom he had found a fearless spirit, equal even to his own. "I have great hopes. What say you ?"

"He has the true old English spirit, he never knows when he is beaten ;" Roly said to me, as we went to our seats, for a crush of Members

came pouring in. "And I will tell you another thing, Tommy,—he will not be beaten always. If we can only dish that Dust-pan Bill, (or even if we have it) I will back him for First Lord of the Treasury. All he wants is mellowing, and time will bring it."

Before the resumption of the great debate, a few little questions were asked, concerning the very sad news of Saturday. The Leader of the Government replied, that "there had scarcely been time as yet, to verify the last official despatches. However, there appeared to be some grounds to apprehend, that another unforeseen, and inevitable disaster, in some measure, had befallen the British arms. A limited number of British officers appeared, to some extent, to have lost their lives, in the execution of their duty. This, however, was beyond prevision. They might have incurred some risk, and indeed the result appeared to confirm that view. But Her Majesty's Government had incurred no responsibility whatever, having simply accepted parenthetical functions under—certainly not the Man-in-the-Moon, as an honourable Member

suggested, with a levity incomprehensible, and most reprehensible—but under the legitimate and legitimately constituted authorities of—well, of the locality.”

Being asked, if the dead men were our flesh and blood, he replied, that “to such an interrogation, highly impolitic in the present condition of difficult and delicate negotiations, seven different forms of reply, very naturally, and conclusively presented themselves. But without further advices, and instructions, and the necessary period for their consideration, it became his duty to deprecate further expenditure of public time.”

Being asked, whether these men had not been sent, with the strongest pledges any words could give, to back them up with a British force, and under most solemn assurance, that every act of theirs would be the direct act of the Government of England; he replied, that “no less than fourteen, entirely distinct and apparently materially repugnant, yet easily reconcileable constructions, might be placed upon their sealed instructions. Each of these interpretations had its own

undeniable merits, and claim to unbiassed, and leisurely discussion. And, for that purpose, each of them, as simply as possible, and yet essentially, presented itself, with a convenient quadrifurcation. As soon as negotiations were concluded —by which he did not mean, ‘as soon as all our men were killed;’ though the honourable Member was welcome to his croak—he would gladly undertake to appoint a day, for the discussion of those fifty-six issues. Meanwhile, he refused to be badgered.”—Wherewith down he sat; as no other man can.

His candour, good temper, and unusual lucidity were rewarded with an outburst of natural applause; while the Member for —, whose brother had been killed, arose as if to speak; but could not do it.

But not quite so easily did the great man get off. Without condescending to consult mephitic oracles, Lord Grando Crushbill arose, and spoke well upon the main question before us. He met the vile Bill, with no weak amendment, no confession and avoidance, but the downright “damn,” which every foreigner knows well, to

be the word whereby we live. No precedent could be discovered, for this brief form of suggesting rejection, and the Speaker pronounced that it was not in accordance with strict Parliamentary usage, for the noble Member to move—"Damn the Bill;" or at least for the motion to be entered.

That speech of Lord Grando—a genuine Philippic—is well known to every true Briton; and as no other man will ever read this book, unless it be a stout American, it is needless for me to cite it here. But while he went on, there was gnashing of teeth, and signs of pale liver disease among the folk, who have learned from Egypt nothing but Egyptian courage, and from Africa in general, the Ostrich-trick. After that, it sounded very mild to move, that the Bill be read this day six months!

To second this motion, Chumps arose; as had been arranged beforehand. And Bill spoke uncommonly well, so far as I am a judge of such matters. He went at it, as if he was splitting down a sheep, for a good customer come for kidneys—his father was the first man in

London, I believe, who put kidneys up to two-pence halfpenny, and fourpence is the price in that same shop now, and my mother stopped her ears when they asked her such a figure, and did the same thing when she told me of it—however, there was no mistake about Bill's meaning. He had not left Oxford long enough as yet, to forget all the very plain directions of Aristotle, Cicero, and Horace; and whatever was in him, he showed us very honestly, with meat-saw, and chopper, and no hems of flank tucked under. If any objection could be made, it was this—that he followed his father in the way of good weight, perhaps a little more substance than we wanted for our money; as a marrowbone swindles us, by being solid.

Things happen oddly in this odd world; and a few years ago, could anybody have imagined that the brush of Joe Cowl, the chimney-sweep, would ever come out at the top of the pot of the English Constitution? And not only so, but that you would find it there, brandished against, and quite covering with smuts the new bright steel cleaver from the shop of Mr. Chumps!

Time works wonders ; and perhaps you will exclaim, that the greatest wonder of all was the fact, that the son of "Bubbly Upmore" the boiler—however, let that stop till we come to it.

Joe had a very large command of words, irregular perhaps, and undisciplined, and more than once, we had to call out, "Order!" At first, from professional habit, he stopped, and pulled out his book, as if to enter "Kitchen-chimney, at five o'clock;" which made Bill, and me, who understood this motion, look at one another, and laugh heartily. Moreover, he had a large command of voice; as behoved a man who had beaten all the rest on his walk, with the shrill cry of, "Se-veep!" I whispered to the honourable Member on our side, who had done the hen so beautifully; and he (being gifted with ventriloquism) in the middle of one of Joe's grandest passages, upset the whole effect, by producing the loud call of the trade, in its longest melancholy—"Se-veep!" so that Joe jumped round, and stared; as if a rival bag, and brush were after him. This was not fair play perhaps; but Cowle deserved it; for the whole

of his eloquence was nothing but abuse. He blackened all the people, on whose shillings he had lived, and besmattered everybody with a slate above his head. In short, there was no man, or woman, in existence, with any right to be so, except Joseph Cowle.

We wanted Sir Roland to deliver his speech next; but he said, perhaps too loudly, "I never follow sweeps;" and presently the House was listening to a gentleman, who is always heard with pleasure for his brave manly sentiments, impartiality, and scorn of all pretences. He demolished the Bill, in most admirable style, putting all the arguments against it, better than our side had put them; and then to my surprise declared, that in spite of all that, he had made up his mind to vote for it.

This brought up Sir Roland, and his speech was very fine. Strong indignation made strong words; as the wrath of the billow creates its roar. "For finicking argument what care I? Can a man split straws with a dagger at his throat? Eternal shame falls upon our land, that any man in it should have dreamed of such

an act. The man who proposed such an outrage, must have done it, as a lesson towards the stabbing of his own mother." For this he was loudly called to "order;" but disdained the call, and went on reckless. "Where can I find words strong enough? The difficulty is, not to fashion, but to find them. Language has never been made for such cases; for what tongue could have told, that such a case would ever be? Yet, perhaps, it was as well, that there should be this defect; for what language could move lunatics?" Here there was a great row; but Sir Roland's voice was strong. "The word I have used may not be of high courtesy; but it is of deepest charity. I can look across this House, with my hands hanging down, solely upon that supposition. Her Majesty's Ministers love to leave us in the dark. They keep us so still—whether common sense demands their consignment to strait-waistcoat, or to the gallows."

Seldom perhaps has any "limited number of human beings" made a greater row—except in some Liberal massacre—than was now to be had, in all sizes and samples, among men whose

names are watchwords. I saw—though he tried to do it quite behind his hat—a Right Honourable Member, whose name is fame, make a trumpet of his hand, and blow out the most hideous screech that ever quelled a “railway-hooter;” and I could not have believed my eyes, unless my ears had been at the back of them. In a word, there was no word, neither any sense among us, head being gone universally, and body left working about, like a worm cut in two.

In the thick of this turmoil, Lord Grando came up, and shook hands with Roly; who was now as quiet, as the stump of the match, that has blown up the castle.

“Something like a maiden speech that was,” he said; “but the guillotine maiden, I’m afraid, my dear fellow. And we shall operate first upon our own heads. However, better that than slow poisoning.”

At first, I did not understand what he meant; but seeing that Roly did, I asked him to explain. He seemed to find me wonderfully stupid—as I am, especially when at all excited, and by this time I was all excitement—but he managed to ex-

plain that he had done more harm, than good by his strong short eloquence. He had moved many hearts, which had been covered up (for reasons of Inland Revenue, like a vehicle unused), but he had not done it in the way to bring them out, comfortably, and with himself inside them. To do that properly, there must be no appearance of call, or demand, or anything at all unpleasant—such as rebukes of conscience are—but a gentle opening of a quiet door at first; as if one came by accident, to find something that belonged to one. But who can blame Roly, for not understanding that? He had stirred up right feeling, all the wrong way of the grain; and it was not at all thankful, for being stirred up.

After many more speeches, some right and some wrong, and—which seemed to be first thought of—some good, and some bad; the Prime-Minister rose, to wind up the debate, at about ten minutes past midnight. The House was as silent as a hive of smoked bees, with just one fellow, here and there, not quite dead. I prepared myself for the finest treat of ears, and mind, and perhaps of heart also—though

he seldom troubles that—and I said to myself, “No prejudice, if you please!”

However, it was useless to say that. When a man, coming out of his front door, sees another man hacking down his pet tree, is the sense of high art supreme with him? Does he stop to admire the attitude, the muscles, the skilful swing, the bright implement? Nay, rather, in a fine rage, out he rushes, and shouts, “What do you mean by this, sir?”

But making allowance for all my “paltry wrath”—as his sycophants call it—I found it impossible to catch the great man’s meaning, as it should be caught. That is to say, well over the heart, thrown straight at it, as a good fielder throws up, and not over one’s head, or between one’s legs, or twisting in and out, like a left-handed bowler’s ball. But for all that, I felt that his voice was grand, and his power enormous; if he would have used it simply, and after the manner of his favourite author. The fault perhaps lies in the multiplicity of his mind, which does not consider the simplicity of ours.

Perhaps, he never had a worse cause to plead ; and in the bottom of his heart—which is sound, I do believe—he must have known that, far better than our shallow natures knew it. When at last, he broke out of the dense haze of argument into the pure sky of eloquence, almost he persuaded me not to be an Englishman, but for the thought that he himself was one.

“All up now, Tommy!” Sir Roland said to me, as the last tones of that silvery voice, like music for the dead, hung hovering ; “after that, it is all up with England.”

But I answered—“Hold my belt, a minute. I will try it, whatever comes of it.”

For the last two hours, and indeed for the whole of the evening, I had felt throughout my system, that it was in a very extraordinary state. Thumping of the heart, and great expansion of the chest, tingling of arms and legs, and great inhalings of hot light air, had confused me ; and whenever a draught from the ventilators (which are like a blow of steam) came under me, I seemed to feel my dress (which I

had chosen for its lightness), fill, like the feathers of a bird at rising. Sometimes indignation, sometimes pleasure, sometimes lofty ambition to be useful to my Country, and to Laura's, had been hoisting at me, like a balanced lever. "Don't be afraid," I said, "I can't stop down, any longer. But try to get me a hearing."

To the sudden astonishment of the crowded House, (which could scarcely believe its own eyes at first) I, Tommy Upmore, went up gently, and steadily, as a ring of blue smoke rises, from a cigar, where no draught is. Honourable Members were leaving their seats, for the critical Division, which should split up England; but with one accord, they all turned round, and stared. Remembering what Professor Brachipod had told me, I used my hands and feet so well, with my curls spread out to catch the air, that I steered my course, as accurately as I ever steered a boat to bump another. Beneath me, there seemed to be breathless amazement; but I found myself perfectly calm, and smiled.

Avoiding all peril of fire, I hovered, with buoyant delight in every fibre, and a tingle of

disdain at the terror of the House—for the greatest men looked quite small down there—till I came to a large beam of the roof; heart of British oak it was; and against it I brought up, with a perfectly erect, and perhaps dignified presentment.

In this position, I caught the Speaker's eye, and removing my hat, which I placed upon the beam, made my bow to him, and sought permission to address the House. The debate being closed, and the division-bell ringing, I could hardly expect to be allowed to speak. But the case was exceptional; and more than that, everybody longed to hear what I had got to say. The Right Honourable, the Speaker, raised his wig, to be certain that his head was right, under it; and with no further symptom of surprise—for he had seen a great many stranger sights than this—said slowly,

“I find no precedent, for a speech from the roof, by any Honourable Member. But I am willing to be guided by the sense of the House, in a case so unprecedented.”

Then the silence, which was now becoming

painful to me, by reason of my loneliness up there, was broken with loud cries of, "Speak up, Larkmount!" from Members who did not know my name,—“Speak up, Tommy!” from the gentlemen who did; and “Speak down, Tommy!” from my private friends, who were beginning to understand all about it.

“The Honourable Member for Larkmount has possession of the House,” said Mr. Speaker.

“Sir,” I replied, in a very clear voice, at the same time unbuttoning my coat, which was made like the one I had flown with at Happy-stowe; “I will not presume upon your indulgence, nor trespass on the kindness of the House below me, except with a very brief quotation, well known to all British Members, whom I would ask to join me in reciting it.”

I had now drawn forth a little Union Jack, made for me by my darling; and flinging it open from its hollow silver staff, waved it in the strong light, around my head, keeping time with the noble lines I sang, in a voice that made the heart of oak resound, and the hearts and lungs of men rebound—

“The flaunting flag of liberty,
Of Gallia's sons the boast,
Oh never may a Briton see,
Upon the British coast!

“The only flag that freedom rears,
Her emblem on the seas,
Is the flag that braves a thousand years,
The battle, and the breeze.

“But fast would flow the nation's tears,
If traitor hands should seize
The flag that braves a thousand years,
The battle, and the breeze.

“And shall we yield to dastard fears
Our empire of the seas—
The flag that braves a thousand years,
The battle, and the breeze?”

Every face was turned towards me, and every throat joined in with mine, and every arm was waved (even of the Irish Members) to keep time with my waving of the glorious flag. And perhaps there has never been a vaster roar, even in the British House of Commons, than when I came down, with my flag flying bravely, bowed deeply to the Speaker, for his good grace, and took Sir Roland's arm, to go with him to the lobby; for my head was giddy, with excitement, and timidity.

“Keep up your pluck, Tommy,” whispered Sir Roland; “you have done it this time, I believe, my boy. By Jove, how splendidly you sang! You have saved the Country, and won Laura.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ENGLISH LION.

PEOPLE, who care for nothing, are capable of saying almost anything; but even of these, there are not many, who would call the British House of Commons, a sentimental body. But anybody, being at all a body, must now and then feel its flesh rebel at the ghostly proceedings of its Cock-loft tenant. Pure reason (like the doctrine of free trade) is a very fine existence, if it would only work. But, alas! like the other, it finds practical issue mainly in keeping people out of work.

The deep love of our birth, which arises with our life, rose anew in the heart of every Englishman, and forced him to scorn petty faction, and vote, as his father and mother would have

made him. The infamous and traitorous plot (which would have ended, in the ancient days, at Tower Hill) ended in a very hot majority of more than fifty, against the Government. As a last faint hope, they appealed to the Country, which had long borne patiently its sickness of them.

Pending my second return for Larkmount, (which took to itself all the glory of my deed, and pelted every Radical, who dared to show his nose, near the bottom of the hill it stood upon) I ventured to pay a little visit to the Towers; though perhaps I should have waited, till the issue was secure. But I make bold to say, from my own experience, that no one, who has been through all the ins and outs of love, as I have been obliged to do, can stop without hurrying to the end of them, whether good or bad. And in the sad humility, which true love feels, I was even scared by fancies, that my darling might dislike the unusual course I had adopted, for her sake. It was pretty sure to cause some curiosity about her, and perhaps even nasty scientific questions, such as seem to

have no reverence for the sanctity of home. Few names were more conspicuous than mine, just now, as perhaps was only natural; and I could not resent it. In a very short time, that would be wiped out; for fame is no better than a schoolboy's slate; and the surest way to expunge it, is to try to write it deeper. My little notoriety soon became a nuisance to me; all I cared for was, that those I loved should love me for my own sake; and any public reputation seems to interfere with that.

Therefore, I have never felt more humble in my life, than when I sat by Laura's side, one lovely April day, beneath the famous Oak-tree, which her mother was fond of sketching. The only leaves upon the tree were a few that had stood the winter; and the young buds were not ready yet, to push their faded history by.

I had always been handy with my knife, from the time I cut bread and bacon with it; and now I carved upon the bench "T. U.," while she looked on, and encouraged me.

Then I said, "Let me put something much

better now. Over it I shall cut 'L. T. T.' And when you come here, after I am gone, you will be compelled to think of me."

"How strange you are, Tommy!" she said, as I sharpened my knife on my boot, for my feet are as fine as a lady's. "Any one who did not know you well, would think that your fame had been too much for you. You are not half so simple, as you used to be. I suppose, you expect to be Prime Minister, when the Conservatives come in."

I took no notice of this, because I wanted her to go on with it. So I carved a very excellent "L. T.," while she kept on looking at the cows and sheep.

"Dear me!" she cried, pulling out her watch from a place, which was a very great favourite with my arm; "I had no idea it was so late. I must leave you to finish your sculpture, I am afraid. Good-bye, Tommy, for a long time now."

"What must be, must;" I replied with great firmness. And then up I jumped, with my knife in my hand, because she was making off

so fast. "Don't be in such a dreadful hurry, Laura. Why, you are crying, dear!"

"Am I indeed? And even if I were, it need not disturb the condition of your mind. All you care about now is politics, like Roly. How I do despise all politics!"

"And so do I; except for one little thing;" I answered, "and you know well what that little thing is."

"Yes, a very little thing indeed," she replied, taking good care not to look at me; "the smallest thing in all the world, no doubt."

"Do try to have some particle of reason;" I exclaimed.

"I am all pure reason itself," she replied.

"You are all pure beauty, and warm heart;" I answered; "and what is the good of saying, that you don't care about me?"

"Did I say that? I don't believe I ever did. I was only trying to think it, when you behaved so badly. But if I said that, it was a great story, Tommy."

"You know what the penalty for a story is;" I answered. And her eyes shone with sunny tears, while she paid it.

"Darling sweet," I said, for I never touched her, without being carried quite beyond myself; "all I was waiting for, was to know, what last letter I might put here. I want to put a 'U'; I so long to put a 'U'; the one you in the world that just suits me to a T. 'Laura Towers Upmore.' I won't do it, without your full permission."

"Well, dear," she replied, after some consideration; "Roly has given his full consent now; and my dear mother loves you, like her own son. And I—well, never mind about me; I am nobody. Only I feel, that your time should not be wasted, with all the great things that you will have to do, after saving the Country, to begin with. So perhaps it would be wiser, dear, to put me down with 'U.'"

Now what do you suppose that I did next? Embraced her, kissed her, shed tears with her? As young people do, when they agree to get married, to practise for the time to come. Nay, such things are not to be talked about; or why were trees made, and benches, and moss (the very essence, and symbol of silence, all the year),

and houses far off, to show what is to come, yet not blink a window beyond their own doors?

The real thing that I did—which will stir every female heart, tenfold more than chastest salutations—was done with a thumb and finger pushed, on each side simultaneously, to the bottom of my double-breasted waistcoat pockets.

“Look at these, Laura, while I put our names into a true lover’s knot;” I said, just as if it was a pair of blue kidney-beans I was showing. “They are come to be eclipsed, my darling, by the brilliance of your eyes.”

“Why, they are amethysts! But I never saw such amethysts. They seem to have such a lot of light inside them!”

“So they have, Laura. But what a cold light, darling, compared with what comes from your heart into mine!”

* * * *

There is nothing that cannot be denied; except that the present condition of things is a great deal better than the past. The humbug of “free trade” is dead at last. The blessing of “Paternal Government” (delivered over the

wrong dish of broth) is gone back, like a curse, to roost at home. An Englishman now may eat his breakfast, without gulping down more lies than tea ; and may smile at his children, without a smothered sigh, at prolonging a race of dastards. In a word, we have once more a Government, that knows its own mind, and has a mind to know. Whether it be Radical, or Tory, matters little to the average Englishman ; so long as it acts with courage, candour, common sense, and consistency. But if its policy be anarchy, quibbling, robbery, cowardice, and treason—then we cast it out (like a leper, and a leopard, mingling sores, and spots, and crawl) and, to save our home, recall that true supporter of our shield and sword, noble once, and not yet ignoble, the sturdy old lion of England.

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